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## *Announcing*

## The Sixth Annual Dreiser Essay Prize

The International Theodore Dreiser Society is pleased to announce the Sixth Annual Dreiser Essay Prize. The award is sponsored by the Dreiser Society and is given annually to the graduate student or untenured faculty member who submits the best previously unpublished essay on any aspect of the work of the American writer Theodore Dreiser.

Applicants may submit essays that consider any part of Dreiser's corpus or that connect his life or work to those of other writers or to his times. In addition to a cash award of $250, the winning essay will appear in *Dreiser Studies*, a refereed journal sponsored by the Society. Other worthy essays besides the winner will be considered for publication as well.

Essays should follow MLA style. Applicants should not identify themselves on the essay but should instead provide their names, addresses (including email address), and "Dreiser Essay Prize Competition" on a separate cover page. Submit *three* copies of the essay by August 1, 2005, to

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2004 DREISER ESSAY PRIZE WINNER

# *The Financier* and the Ends of Accounting

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"Ye'd made a good bookkeeper"
—Dreiser, "The Mighty Rourke"

*The Financier* (1912) constitutes the first volume of Theodore Dreiser's massive trilogy about Frank Cowperwood, a charismatic and amoral financial titan modeled after Charles Yerkes, a notorious municipal railroad tycoon who died in 1905. It recounts Cowperwood's first thirty-six years, from 1837 to 1873, tracing his education as a youth, the development of his uncanny gift for brokerage and finance, his quick rise in the world of Philadelphia city finance, his conviction and imprisonment for embezzling city funds, and his financial redemption soon after his release.

By building the novel around Cowperwood's covert and criminal use of public debt, Dreiser highlights the tension between forms of obligation that serve the private schemes of individuals such as Cowperwood and forms of obligation that, preserving the community, obstruct these schemes. For Dreiser, the first kind of obligation is a natural or "chemic" imperative that individuals like Cowperwood fearlessly obey, and it is dependent on forms of accounting, financial and amoral, that are inexplicable to the general public. The second kind of obligation, to obey public laws, juridical or religious, is artificial and contemptible, an expression of "those shibboleths of the weak and inexperienced mentally."[1] The first half of the novel, focusing on Cowperwood's financial accounting, and the second half, focusing on his legal accountability, bring these two forms of obligation together to document the natural and sociological forces that determine the limits, or margins, of accountability, what falls within and without the edges, literally and figuratively, of various kinds of accounts: financial ledgers, the Phila-


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delphia *Public Ledger* (the city newspaper), the reports of Pinkerton detectives, law books, the Bible, and *The Financier* itself.

The novel's meticulous detailing of what can and can't be brought to account has a direct—and intentional, I claim—bearing on the novel's argument about narrative form. One of Dreiser's primary aims is to show how conventional biographies and biographical fiction cannot adequately describe, let alone explain, Cowperwood or his status as an agent of Nature. These conventional literary genres cannot adequately convey the sociology that accounts for the financier's demise or the metaphysics that accounts for what Dreiser calls his "inevitability" (qtd. in Lingeman 267). In the place of these narrative forms, *The Financier* inaugurates a new genre, what we might call, borrowing today's familiar television term, the nature special. Dreiser indicated the main aim of the nature special and its difference from biography when he explained to a reviewer that *The Financier* studies a "condition," not "a man" ("Theodore Dreiser Now Turns" 196). Dreiser is interested in Cowperwood (or Yerkes) less as an exceptional individual than as a symptom or representative of a particular kind of social activity and psychological attitude. He set the novel in the economic boom after the Civil War, he said, because these years, like periods in ancient Rome or Machiavelli's Italy, featured singular examples of "mental action spurred by desire, ambition, vanity, without any of the moderating influences which we are prone to admire—sympathy, tenderness, and fair play" ("Theodore Dreiser Now Turns" 196). Philadelphia, the nation's financial center after the Civil War, provided an ideal setting to study the "natural action" of men, such as Yerkes, who were unrestrained by "convention, theory, prejudice and belief of any kind" ("Theodore Dreiser Now Turns" 197). *The Financier* thus follows the growth of a natural creature (Philip Gerber calls him "*Genus Financierus Americanus*" [*Theodore Dreiser* 92]), documents the training of his instincts as an opportunist and plotter, and, beginning with the financial panic following the Chicago fire, focuses on a dramatic, prolonged test of his survival skills.[2] In other words, *The Financier* documents the operation of nature and its laws as they reveal themselves in the title character's fight with other men and his attempt to impose stability upon an unpredictable universe.

More exactly, and more centrally for my argument, *The Financier* documents how nature and its laws express themselves through artificial forms of and attempts at accounting. Accounting provides the medium and idiom in which Cowperwood's fight for survival is carried out. This focus marks *The Financier*'s difference from Dreiser's other works that also study natural desires, or Desire, in conflict with conventional morality and explains

why Dreiser not only compares the financial panic and the legal case against Cowperwood but also leads us inexorably from one to the other. In the same way financial accounting serves as the instrument through which Cowperwood acts out his will-to-power, legal accounting (combined with narrative accounting in surveillance reports and news stories) serves as the instrument through which his enemies attack him after the panic. I want to suggest, in fact, that Dreiser's nature special narrates the fate not of the financier, exactly, but of accounting itself. Critics commonly note that in Dreiser's fiction, individuals act as agents of impersonal forces and imperatives; in *The Financier*, this force or imperative assumes the form of the will-to-account, or, what amounts to the same thing, the will-to-make-accountable. Cowperwood and his antagonists achieve importance primarily as bearers of this will, as instruments through which accounting attempts to colonize more and more spaces, material (in Cowperwood's hands), moral (in his nemesis Butler's hands), and disciplinary (in the court's hands). Accounting, for Dreiser, resembles Spirit for Hegel or Capital for Marx. *The Financier* follows this apotheosized abstraction—Accounting, or Accountability—as it manifests itself through the social activity of men, most obviously under crisis conditions that encourage the full play of individuals' natural instincts.[3]

Reading *The Financier* as a tale of "accounting" rather than a tale of Desire answers two questions students and scholars routinely ask about it: why does Dreiser give such sustained attention to technical aspects of Cowperwood's financial operations and the legal process, and why does the narrative repeat itself so much, sometimes including four or five accounts of the same event in a single chapter? Dreiser's editor at Harper's, Ripley Hitchcock, struggling to streamline his massive manuscript, observed that such intricate and repeated accounts made "rather involved, difficult reading" and emphasized that "it is the main point of the situation that the reader wants to grasp" (qtd. in Hutchisson, "Creation" 249). For Dreiser, however, the presence of these seemingly extraneous accounts may be the main point of the novel. In the universe of *The Financier*, accounting precedes human subjects, constituting them, shaping their ambitions, providing both the instrument and language in which individuals, acting out the mandates of nature, understand and carry out their plots. The wearying expository accounts, seen this way, do not so much interrupt the novel's plot and plotters as frame or embed them. Accounting, in a very real sense, is the main character, certainly the main subject, of the novel. The accretion of so much detail, like the pairing of the panic and the trial, illuminates the fate of accounting, its success and failure, its expansion and delimitation.

**Panic and Prospect**

For Dreiser, the world of finance typifies the laws of Nature working in society. In the stock exchange, "men came down to the basic facts of life—the necessity of self care and protection. . . . [F]orce governed this world—hard, cold force and quickness of brain. . . . To get what you could and hold it fast . . . that was the thing to do" (*TF* 102-03). Conventional morality holds no sway here; each man looks out for his own interests. The law of survival of the fittest, under which, as Herbert Spencer put it, "personal ends must be pursued with little regard to the evils entailed on unsuccessful competitors" (qtd. in Lingeman 85), determines the fortunes of stock operators. However, as Cowperwood's early success demonstrates, individuals, to advance their own interests, must depend on and do business with each other. They must plot at least a segment of their future together by binding themselves to contracts, loan schedules, and other financial obligations. For Dreiser, debt serves as the most obvious sign and instrument of this interdependence. In flush times, debt binds lenders and borrowers productively, advancing the interests of each. In financial panics, however, such as the one that triggers the main action of the novel, debt transforms co-operation into desperate competition. Financial panic serves as an exemplary Naturalist moment, a trial or test intensifying and revealing the stakes of Darwinian struggle. The weak, the cowardly, and the shortsighted, unable to compete for scarce credit to pay off their debts, go bankrupt. Panic institutes a "hard logic, sad [and] cruel" (*TF* 92), that licenses creditors' ruthlessness and activates their predatory instincts.

More exactly, panic initiates their plotting. The strong do not impulsively attack the weak but rather strategize how best to capitalize on their vulnerabilities. Before the panic, constructing his seemingly hazard-proof accounting structure, Cowperwood imagines he can circumvent or protect himself against such plots. However, during the panic and, indeed, directly because of it, his every action triggers plotting by others, and their plots continually trigger new plots and counterplots as everyone calculates how best to exploit Cowperwood's shortfall. Every effort of his to balance his financial accounts must account for these counter-designs. Crucially, however, Cowperwood's efforts fail because these counter-designs initiate forms of accounting—new financial bookkeeping, retribution, surveillance, ethical investigation, legal adjudication, and penal discipline—that circumscribe his strategic options. In short, Cowperwood's financial accounting subjects him to the accounting of others. As a result of the panic, his enemies attempt to make him accountable.

Two forms of accounting, what I will call "prospect" and "payback," echoing Dreiser's own language, propel these schemes and counter-schemes. "Prospect," by which I mean both a temporal outlook and a spatial or mental overview, describes Cowperwood's confidence, shattered by the panic, that he has accounted for everything related to his future. It also describes the efforts by Butler after the exposure of the defalcation and the affair to bring the financier and his financial manipulations within the "purview" (*TF* 672) of the law, the limits of which become the focus of the trial. The second form of accounting that drives the novel, "payback," describes the attempt, after the fire, by everyone who has borrowed money or speculated on margin to meet their financial obligations to brokers, banks, and, in Cowperwood's case, the city Treasury. It describes, similarly, the effort by Cowperwood and the city officials to eliminate the unexpected and incriminating Treasury shortfall exposed by the panic. Crucially, payback also refers to the attempts by Butler to enact vengeance upon the financier for taking his daughter ("ye had to steal my daughter from me in the bargain" [615]), a settling of accounts that we are clearly meant to pair with the paying of debts, as Dreiser's use of financial language makes clear: Butler attempts to "pay" (745) Cowperwood back in "return" (440) for his theft, to make things "even" (744) with him, to take back what is "belongin' " (368) to him. (In his philosophical essay "Equation Inevitable," Dreiser also equates "vengeance," "repayment," and "striking a balance" [173].)

These two kinds of accounting activity constitute one determining force in the novel. Operating against them and driving the plot, and plotters, forward is a second kind of determinism, what I will call contagion, the epidemic agency characterized by the Chicago fire, the financial panic incited by the fire, and the resistless spread of news, rumors, and other narrative accounts prompting and prompted by the panic. *The Financier* studies how these two countervailing determinisms, one that seeks to contain accounts and one that serves to spread them, fuel and foil each other. It examines how contagion (e.g., fire, panic, publicity) generates the urgency to settle accounts (e.g., to pay off financial debts, to pay back enemies), and, conversely, how the urgency to settle accounts produces the very forms of contagion (e.g., publicity, more debt) that inevitably disable and undermine any full accounting. Dreiser buoys his narrative upon this dialectic to show that accounts are never closed or closable: there is always some remainder, something "extra"—an "outstanding obligation" (*TF* 293), an "extra" (292) news account, increased brokers' margins, an irrepressible desire, some act of Nature—that not only endures but also incites more acts of accounting. Indeed, the clash between closing accounts and opening new ones under-

writes *The Financier*'s basic thesis that nature and the individuals through whom it operates cannot be fully accounted for.

For Dreiser, the financial panic caused by the Chicago fire serves as the central exhibit of this clash of determinisms. In it, we see how Cowperwood's efforts to gain prospect, to bring space (the expanding city) and time (the expanding future) within the margins of his accounting, is frustrated by the epidemic effects activated by the fire. Put simply, Cowperwood fails because he imagines that he can account for everything. Hired to help the city pay back its debts (significantly, to float one debt to pay off another), he has free access to the city's funds, which he is allowed to borrow and invest on his own account so long as he "render[s] an accounting" (*TF* 191) or strikes a "balance" (572)—that is, returns the principal—at the end of every month. He puts this money to work with exquisite efficiency, buying up undeveloped railroad lines, issuing new stock in these lines, and using the profit as margin for more speculations, more hypothecations, and more purchases. It is all "a mere matter of bookkeeping" (191), of shifting around the massive accounts, hundreds of thousands of dollars each, and "transfer [ing] the balances" (275) that he carries "on his books" (279). At the peak of his power—that is, just before the panic—Cowperwood has "surrounded and entangled himself in a splendid, glittering network of connections, like a spider in a spangled net, every thread of which he knew . . . and he was watching all the details" (275). Dependent on such vast, intricate, and fragile credit arrangements, this accounting structure collapses when banks ask him for more collateral or margin to safeguard their loans in the aftermath of the fire. When the stock market crashes, he cashes a $60,000 city check without authorization, and, not long after this, denied access to the Treasury's mother lode, he is forced to close his doors.

Cowperwood fails, clearly, because of these entanglements. He can't pay the higher brokerage margins generated by the panic. More significantly, he fails because he tries to bring everything within a totalizing vision. Dreiser signals the importance of this vision—and anticipates its failure—in a crucial image that connects Cowperwood's watchfulness over his accounts, his supervision of his expanding railroad operations, and a prophecy of his career prospects: "By the summer of 1871, when Cowperwood was nearly thirty-four years of age, he had a banking business estimated at nearly two million dollars . . . and prospects which looked forward along a straight line to wealth which might rival that of any American if he continued" (*TF* 275). The panic exposes and enforces the limits of such prospect(s). Despite his apparent purview over his massive web of accounts, despite the close monitoring of the margin accounts on his books, Cowperwood fails to

consider the margins *of* his account books, fails to see what cannot be accounted for, what lies outside accountability: the "unforeseen, incalculable" (275) financial panic that follows the Chicago fire.

Panic puts an end to Cowperwood's prospects because, for Dreiser, the universe, governed by inscrutable and impersonal forces, subject to chance and flux, must frustrate any attempt to bring the future into line, to plot it, to see it prospectively. ("Nature seeks, if She seeks anything, motion, although apparently in no straight line," wrote Dreiser elsewhere ["The Reformer" 210].) Nature defies any attempt to contain it within a single vision or hold it hostage to a single design. Raging "unchecked" (*TF* 293), the Chicago fire spreads its ruinous financial effects across the nation, from city merchants to their insurers to bankers out East and ultimately to all the businessmen and investors in Philadelphia whose loans these bankers call. Panic shatters Cowperwood's prospects because it radiates beyond his, or anyone's, ability to control. Indeed, the chain of indebtedness that links all of these actors, triggering the stock stampede in Philadelphia, mocks the "endless chain" (198) of Cowperwood's borrowing and leveraging, terminating it and turning it against him.

The panic makes sensationally obvious how every attempt to pay back a debt generates another debt, culminating in Cowperwood's fateful decision, for which he is ultimately sent to prison, to pay on one debt ($500,000) by taking on another (the $60,000). The panic shows, as importantly, how the contagion of indebtedness produces a contagion of narrative accounting, how news reports, rumors, and stories spread like and because of debt. The epidemic radiation of fire ruins him, specifically, because it activates an uncontainable spread of narrative lines that ultimately rupture and replace the "straight line to wealth" encompassed within Cowperwood's prospect(s). These narrative lines play a crucial thematic and narrative role within the storyline of *The Financier*, and they serve, much like Cowperwood's "extra" financial lines, to model the narrative machinery of *The Financier* itself.

*The Financier* is filled with instances of narrative contagion, moments when reports, rumors, and other narrative accounts spread uncontrollably and frustrate the prospect and payback of the principal players. The first instance of this narrative spread comes as an immediate consequence of the fire and occurs, significantly, just as Cowperwood surveys a prospective rail extension, the very line, we are led to believe, that will ensure his "straight line to wealth." Out with his bankers, the financier hears a newsboy shout, "Ho! Extra! Extra! Chicago burning down! Extra! Extra!" (*TF* 292). Spreading outward from the city center, the "extra" account spreads the fi-

nancial panic, mocking Cowperwood's prospect(s) by achieving what he fatally cannot: it brings the unaccountable disaster to account. It incorporates what is outside accounting—what is "extra"—within its textual margins and capitalizes on it. Dreiser signals why Cowperwood will fail—and foreshadows the importance of accounting's margins throughout the remainder of the novel—by training our eyes on the margins of the news account. Under the banner "ALL CHICAGO BURNING" (293) he presents the thirty-five-word headline as an inverted pyramid, the only such typographical gimmick in the novel:

FIRE RAGES UNCHECKED IN COMMERCIAL SECTION SINCE YESTERDAY
EVENING. BANKS, COMMERCIAL HOUSES, PUBLIC BUILDINGS
IN RUINS. DIRECT TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION
SUSPENDED SINCE THREE O'CLOCK TO-
DAY. NO END TO PROGRESS
OF DISASTER IN SIGHT.

We cannot know for certain whether Dreiser intended this visual form to advance his argument about accounting and its limits; it does, however, appear in all extant states of the text, as four inverted pyramids (one for each elliptical sentence) in the manuscript and typescript, and as a single large inverted pyramid in proof. In the published novel, the placement of the break between the last two lines is richly suggestive, for it encourages us literally to see how the prospect of endless progress becomes, once our eyes account for the margin, the prospect of endless disaster.[4] (The inverted pyramid shape also anticipates—even as the panic-producing headline activates—the upending of Cowperwood's own "pyramiding" scheme [190].) Reporting the "unchecked" spread of fire, the spread of narrative lines, like the spread of credit and railroad lines that underwrite the financier's progress, points to disaster. Spreading alarm, these lines spread the panic and ensure that debts cannot be paid in full, that accounts remain open.

The spread of narrative accounts, like the spread of indebtedness, produces more attempts at accounting. We see this when Cowperwood, having no other way to balance financial accounts with the city, goes to Butler to confess his predicament and ask for more money. His decision to give a verbal account of the Treasury shortfall backfires, since, exposing Cowperwood to the accounting—literally, the financial auditing—of city insiders, it sets in motion the financial, personal, and juridical payback schemes, led by Butler, that doom him. Significantly, Cowperwood's confession is punctuated by the newsboy's cries of "Extra! Extra!" (*TF* 304). We are meant to see that efforts to balance accounts, to contain potential scandal and expo-

sure, lead inexorably to new(s) accounts that proliferate beyond his, or anyone's, capacity to contain. To signal this proliferation, Dreiser employs a narrative strategy that he relies on throughout the novel: he repeats himself. In this instance, he has Butler repeat Cowperwood's account of the Treasury shortfall three times within a single chapter.

This series of narrative accounts triggers the predatory instinct in every city insider who discovers Cowperwood's vulnerability. Like every predatory act in *The Financier*, the insiders' attack takes the form of an effort to bring to account. Like Cowperwood's effort to square financial accounts, however, this bringing-to-account is frustrated by the epidemic spread of narrative accounts, particularly in the newspaper. The city insiders realize that if Cowperwood fails and the Treasurer is left "short in his accounts" (*TF* 319), their own illicit borrowing of city money might be exposed, and the publicity attending the missing $500,000 might cost them the upcoming election. They understand that public discredit, like debt, spreads contagiously ("nothing is . . . so indiscriminate as public clamor" [411]). Unable to get rid of the massive Treasury deficit, they search for a way to deflect accountability from themselves. Tipped off by Butler, they decide to use the $60,000 bank draft to scapegoat the financier. They decide, that is, to make him accountable. They do this literally by bringing him to book, compelling this master bookkeeper—who even as a boy knew "how to keep books" (44)—to turn over his account books to their accountants. They want to determine the scope of his accounting, to make visible what he's kept on and off his books, to determine, in short, what and where the margins of his accounting are.

Such a reckoning spreads rather than squares accounts, however. To highlight this spreading, Dreiser plays on the shared vocabulary of finance and rumor: he has an auditor also be a teller. Albert Stires, one of the city accountants poring over Cowperwood's books, is also the bank teller who delivered the fateful $60,000 check to the financier; he is the one who alerts Cowperwood to a rumor he's heard concerning the insiders' plot to make the financier pay for his (out)side accounts. Dreiser signals the thematic importance of accounting's interminability by tracing how rumor spreads through the city's back rooms, one account's auditor becoming its next teller. In one striking instance, Stires tells Cowperwood what one Robert Witherspoon had told him about what "Harmon had said to Strobik and Borchardt that Mollenhauer had said to Butler, in some conference which had been reported to Harmon" (*TF* 454). This spread of rumor endangers the insiders' scheme and provokes more accounting. News editors, catching wind of the rumors, sniff a scandal, and the city insiders realize they must

spin the inevitable exposure. When it becomes clear that a "public storm might break loose at any hour" (457), the insiders craft a public account of Cowperwood's malfeasance, emphasizing that he acted by himself, without authorization, and, since much of his borrowing went unrecorded, outside any accounting ("It would appear that he has been held to no responsibility in these matters" [463]). Pressed by Butler, they go further and set Cowperwood up to be tried, to be "made" (368) criminally accountable for his outside accounting. They expand the scope of their accounting, transforming what had been the "trivial and uncertain matter" (457) of the $60,000 into the centerpiece of their media campaign. Their campaign works. Cowperwood is "written down as 'failed' on a score of ledgers in Philadelphia" and, more disastrously for him, exposed to a public "storm" (379) of ill-will when the citizens' watchdog group, the Citizens' Municipal Reform Association (CMRA), broadcasts his activities in the *Public Ledger*, the same paper that had mapped the spread of the fire and whose "extra" account had fanned the panic.

The machinations of the city insiders are important to *The Financier* not only because they focus our attention on the construction of the margins of accountability—the determination of what accounts are on and off Cowperwood's books, what accounts fall within or without the city's supervision, and how public blame is shifted from inside to "outside the party lines" (*TF* 65)—but also because they introduce the connection between private accounting and public accountability that constitutes the main thematic crux of the novel. They initiate the bringing-to-account—the auditing, surveilling, and disciplining of the financier—that gathers momentum, depth, and breadth as it is taken over by the court and the prison system through the rest of the novel. The machinations of the insiders are important, above all, because they end in Cowperwood's being written down in public accounts. Exposure in the *Public Ledger* marks the irreversibility of his subjection to others' bookkeeping. Once in the newspaper, his scheming exposed to the uncomprehending, moralistic public, the account of his illicit operations spreads beyond his or anyone's ability to stop. In this sense, the spread of the news account, the widening of the "fatal, poisonous field of press discussion" (as Dreiser calls it in *The Titan* 466), continues, even brings to a climax, the work of the panic.

Cowperwood is not the only one whose attempt to square accounts and limit the spread of scandal backfires because of the tendency of narrative accounts, like financial debts in a panic, to spread uncontainably. Butler, for example, wants nothing more than to keep his daughter's affair secret, and he seeks to bring Cowperwood within the clutches of the law as much to

end the affair and prevent its potential exposure as to avenge Cowperwood's theft. Dreiser dwells for several pages on this potential exposure when Butler hires Pinkerton detectives to spy on Cowperwood and confirm the affair. (Like Cowperwood, Aileen uses private bookkeeping to cover her illicit activity; "a private circulating library" has provided the "loophole" [*TF* 364], or excuse, through which her activity outside the home has escaped her father's notice.) Alive to the "danger of publicity" (504), Butler fears that the detective's report will somehow circulate, spreading the scandal it is meant to contain. Indeed, at the end of the novel, despite the Pinkertons' professional discretion, Butler's effort to preempt rumor becomes the subject of rumor—just as the city insiders' effort to deflect their own accountability onto Cowperwood backfires when it becomes the focus of a subsequent exposé in the *Public Ledger*. In fact, the rumor that eventually circulates about the affair focuses not on Aileen but on Butler's own accounting, for the rumor starts as a way to explain the mystery of Cowperwood's harsh punishment. Butler's son hears someone report how his father "got even" with the financier by sending him to prison (744). Neither this gossip nor the accounting it aims to account for stops, however, for when Butler's son asks him about it, Butler says, "I'm not through with him yet. . . . He's had somethin' to pay him for his dirty trick and he'll have more" (745). Only a page after this, Butler's other son is alerted to the same rumor's being passed around his athletic club. He confronts the talebearer, and, to pay him back for repeating what he's heard (actually, to challenge him to repeat it), the son strikes the gossiper. Instead of quelling the scandal, the incident only "make[s] more talk" (750). His effort to settle accounts only spreads accounts.

The spread of news and scandal is important because its contagion, like that of fire and panic, exposes how ineffectual are the various schemes to close accounts in *The Financier*. The spread of news accounts is crucial because it also represents the most powerful expression of conventional moral and civic bookkeeping outside the margins of which Cowperwood, as a self-satisfying agent of Nature, operates. The name of the *Public Ledger*, along with its fateful association with the CMRA—an association prompted by Butler's belief that "he was serving God when he did his best to punish Cowperwood and save Aileen" (*TF* 498)—makes the newspaper's status as moral and civic auditor plain. Like the city insiders who scrutinize Cowperwood's accounts, the Pinkertons who report on Cowperwood's affair, and the overseer who later itemizes Cowperwood's weight and measurements in a prison ledger, the newspaper attempts to bring what was previously unaccountable or outside accounts to account. It aims, inexorably, to account for

everything, for the CMRA is committed to following the Treasury scandal "closely to the end" (459)—a commitment that mocks Cowperwood's failed prospect over the arc of his career. In this sense, the publication of the *Public Ledger* reenacts the panic, which also exposed, through a similarly epidemic agency, the failure of individuals to meet their public (financial) obligations—and, in Cowperwood's case, exposed his betrayal of the "public trust" (464), the public debt itself.

In "Ideals, Morals, and the Daily Newspaper," Dreiser observes that mainstream newspapers perform the work formerly done by preachers and reformers; papers are "guardians of all phases of virtue, honesty, and the like, to say nothing of those shibboleths of the would-be intellectually dominant, 'justice' and 'truth' " (152). Advocating "moral self-control, public and private" for "the good of the other man," the newspaper expresses the obstructing ethics and civic ideals of the "little man" (152). In *The Financier*, the CMRA, publishing its investigations, represents this ethical counterforce. It embodies what Dreiser, drawing on Herbert Spencer, understood to be a metaphysical counterbalance to the natural activity of Cowperwood and the municipal underworld. For Dreiser, physical and social life is simply a balancing act, an "eternal battle" ("Change" 21) between opposing metaphysical tendencies that, whatever their specific character, keep the universe from resting at any extreme.[5] His point, elaborated throughout his essays in *Hey Rub a Dub Dub* (1920), is not that the universe achieves a static balance but rather the opposite: that the natural universe, the world of human society and striving, and the realm of ethics, are each always in the process of balancing. *The Financier* clearly traces the battle between the moral vigilance represented by the CMRA and the amoral license represented by Cowperwood, but Dreiser figures this battle as a clash between abstractions, the accountable and the unaccountable, between the compulsion to achieve balance—he explicitly calls it "repayment" in "Equation Inevitable" (173)—and the compulsion toward imbalance. As he makes clear in another essay, the kind of moral and civic obligations rejected by Cowperwood represent nothing but "balances struck between man and man" ("Change" 21), a form of bookkeeping that keeps the stickling public from seeing that "beyond" their makeshift morality lies a nature that knows nothing of debts.

In "Equation Inevitable," the essay critics most often cite in connection with *The Financier*, Dreiser summarizes the bottom line of his metaphysics of accounting: "Only a balance is maintained" (166). But this balance is never perfect; it merely represents Nature's "desire for rough balance or equilibrium . . . between the darkest extremes of its creative im-

pulses" (165). Nature's "rough balance" implies an excess of one opposing impulse or the other; it thus resembles the balance in financial bookkeeping—that which *remains* to be paid to settle a debt or close an account. It signals a state of suspension or disequilibrium, not stasis. In *The Financier*, imbalance keeps the narrative moving and creates suspense.

Walter Benjamin likens narrative suspense to a "draft" or vacuum in a fireplace that "stimulates the flame and enlivens its play" (100). Benjamin's image is useful for understanding the propelling effect of imbalance in and on Dreiser's narrative because a "draft" resulting from a fire creates *The Financier*'s only suspense, whether Cowperwood will balance his accounts and avoid having to "suspend" (*TF* 423) his operations. When fire destroys Chicago's "vast commercial section" (291), many insurance companies fail, producing "grievous losses" for a "host of Eastern capitalists" (291) with investments in the West. These losses create a financial vacuum that banks try to fill by calling in loans and debtors try to fill by drafting on their bank deposits. The fire also creates an information vacuum. While the "opening reports came too late" on Friday for investors to act, the "facts . . . pouring in thick and fast" (292) on Monday fuel the panic. As a result, Cowperwood makes his fateful $60,000 "overdraft" (574) in order to pay on another debt.

In relation to Cowperwood, the overdraft conjectures forth his enemies' efforts to make him financially and morally accountable as well as narrative accounts of his commercial and sexual malfeasance. One such account is the anonymous letter from a jealous girl accusing Aileen of "running around with a man that she shouldn't" (*TF* 358). This "terrific indictment" (361)—by a "thin, anemic dissatisfied creature" (359) obviously wanting to pay Aileen back simply for being rich and beautiful—will eventually lead to Cowperwood's own indictment largely as personal payback from Butler. When, as the panic intensifies, Cowperwood asks Butler for an extension on a loan, Butler's dour reply—"I'll have to have what's belongin' to me today" (368)—has a double meaning. Intuiting that Aileen lies behind Butler's refusal and knowing that "the least phrase might set the fires blazing," Cowperwood makes a tactical withdrawal. The blaze does start nonetheless. The rest of the novel both maps and constitutes its spread.

A map of spreading fire in *The Financier* actually provides a model for the novel's own narrative determinism. After he confesses his financial predicament to Butler (who subsequently spreads the financier's account to various city officials, as I've noted), Cowperwood scans a story in the *Public Ledger* about the Chicago fire and its probable financial ramifications. The account features a map of Chicago, marking the boundaries of the burned out region. Dreiser dwells on Cowperwood's fascination with the

map, his fear that this account will unleash a panic and require him to find "large sums of money to meet various loans" (*TF* 336). Indeed, Dreiser seems to link the map and the panic, for only a page after it appears the stock collapse begins. In the 1927 revision of the novel, the version in print today, Dreiser reprises the image when a state Senator, fearing newspaper scrutiny of the Treasury deficit, tells the city insiders that "we ought to map out our program very carefully," suggesting that they prosecute the city Treasurer "on our own account" (227) and, to this end, manipulate the emerging press accounts of the shortfall. This metaphorical map, like the earlier actual one, leads directly to a fateful reckoning: Butler, seeing his chance, sets his payback scheme in motion by suggesting that they can scapegoat Cowperwood, citing as cause the financier's unpaid $60,000 draft on the city account. Both maps represent *The Financier*'s own balancing act, its dialectic of contagion and containment. These maps spread as well as specify accountability; they circulate as well as circumscribe narrative accounts; they incite payback as well as illuminate its inevitable, unaccountable failure.

A third and final map image makes this interpretation even clearer. It appears at the very end of the novel, when news of the second panic "was spreading like wild-fire," despite the law's efforts to contain it ("a policeman arrested a boy for calling out the failure of Jay Cooke & Co.") (*TF* 771). Dreiser notes that Cowperwood had "[o]nce, not unlike the Chicago fire map, . . . seen a grand prospectus and map" (770) of Jay Cooke's intended railroad empire. This prospectus now represents the limits, not the expansion, of prospect, for Cooke's "vision of empire" (764), overextended, collapses suddenly, triggering the panic. "The project was so vast," Dreiser remarks, "that it could not well be encompassed by one man" (765). The map signals Cooke's catastrophic failure to settle accounts (and the epidemic spread of public indebtedness this failure precipitates), but it also highlights Butler's ultimate failure to make Cowperwood accountable, for Cowperwood, pardoned and freed from prison, exploits the spreading panic and becomes a millionaire.

**Purview**

Dreiser structures *The Financier* around two events, the financial panic and Cowperwood's court case. Both focus on Cowperwood's unpaid debt to the public, financial and ethical. In both events we see how others, prompted by Butler's secret vengeance, try to make the financier pay, financially and personally, for his illicit borrowing and, more importantly, to

make him and his "extra" accounts—his side deals, his rail extensions, his unrecorded speculations, his extra-marital affair, and, finally, his unpaid Treasury balance—subject to increasingly conventional and constricting forms of public discipline. In the panic he is subjected to the auditing of city accountants and the muckraking of the CMRA, two forms of bookkeeping that find expression in the *Public Ledger*. In the court case, he is subjected to the written law and its accounting. The trial exposes and explains the financier's manipulation of the public debt, but more importantly, in the name of the court's "obligation" to the public (as Dreiser puts it in the 1927 revision of the novel [286]), it renders its judgment upon him. Butler's private campaign to make Cowperwood publicly accountable, to make him pay his debt to the public (and to Butler himself) and to bring him under the law's discipline, culminates when Cowperwood is convicted by a jury and sentenced to prison. In prison his every action is brought under the panoptical gaze and accounting of the law, an accounting literalized when Cowperwood is led naked into a "record and measurement room" (*TF* 687), where his body's measurements—"arms, legs, chest, waist, hips . . . the color of his eyes, his hair, his mustaches" (686)—are written down in an overseer's "record-book."

Such a plot line—the accountant made accountable, the railroad baron "railroaded" (*TF* 507) into prison, the visionary brought under prison surveillance, the bookkeeper reduced to figures in a prison ledger—might seem to suggest that accounts can be squared. However, the last part of *The Financier* makes plain that Cowperwood, as an agent of nature, cannot be explained, reckoned with, or convinced of the legitimacy and relevance of public morality and obligation, not even by the seemingly totalizing public discipline of the state, the most thorough of all public bookkeepers.

Just as the financial panic exposes the limits of what Cowperwood can bring to account or bring within his financial "prospects" (*TF* 275), the financier's court case exposes the limits of what the law can bring within its "purview" (672). The court case focuses on these limits by interrogating not simply whether Cowperwood's overdraft of the $60,000 during the panic constitutes a loan or a theft, nor simply whether Cowperwood should be considered a legally accountable agent (that is, whether he acts on his own or acts for the city and whether by following city custom he acts inside or outside the law), but also whether a decision against him makes every debtor in a panic a potential felon. As an appellate judge argues, a guilty verdict "extends the crime of constructive larceny to such limits that any business man who engages in extensive and perfectly legitimate stock transactions, may, before he knows it, by a sudden panic in the market or a

fire . . . become a felon" (633). At issue in the court case, in other words, is not only the extent of Cowperwood's accountability but the extensiveness of legal accountability itself: how far the law can or should apply in a world where unaccountable nature makes certain obligations unfulfillable. For the dissenting judge, a guilty verdict, extending wherever indebtedness extends, makes the spread of legal accountability coterminous with the spread of panic itself.

For Dreiser, the law comes against its own limits when it must decide the degree to which unaccountable disasters exonerate individuals who have disobeyed the law. A financial panic occasions such an interrogation because in a panic, through no discernible fault of their own, investors and businessmen find themselves suddenly short in their accounts, either because banks and brokers demand more margin or because there is suddenly no cash available to pay off existing debts. In a panic, good-faith obligations (i.e., debts, contracts) cannot be met, and, for this reason, unpaid loans cannot be distinguished from thefts except by determining beyond a reasonable doubt whether borrowers knew they would be unable to pay back loans when they took them out. Panic, however, being unforeseeable and, even after its onset, unpredictable, makes this determination of criminal intent impossible. In short, Nature, obeying its own inscrutable laws, sets limits to the application of "all written law" (*TF* 549).

At least this is what Cowperwood's lawyer, Steger, argues. He insists that "only the most unheralded and the unkindest thrust of fortune . . . [,] a fire and its consequent panic[,]" have brought his client "within the purview of the law" (*TF* 672). He makes this final, futile plea at Cowperwood's sentencing, which imposes a new debt whose terms Cowperwood cannot control. The sentencing focuses our attention on the limits—the reach as well as the futility—of the law's efforts at accounting by pairing Cowperwood with a petty thief who, like Cowperwood, fails to be disciplined even as he is punished. The thief, a slow, slouching African-American named Ackerman, seems oblivious to the entire point of his sentencing and, for that matter, of the law. He fails to grasp that taking what doesn't belong to him constitutes a crime, and he exasperates the judge, who attempts to make him obey the law by suspending his sentence, holding it over his head in perpetuity. Like Ackerman, Cowperwood does not recognize his own culpability. Also like Ackerman, Cowperwood is put under a potentially endless obligation, for Butler privately vows to spend his last dollar ensuring the financier's downfall and insists, even after Cowperwood goes to jail, that he hasn't "got even" (376) with the financier yet, that Cowperwood has "had somethin' to pay him for his dirty trick, and he'll have more" (745). However, endless

payback schemes, as the dismantling of Cowperwood's own accounting structure shows in the panic, can't succeed: Cowperwood is sentenced to four years in prison, but he never serves his full term. The Governor, urged by Cowperwood's lawyer, pardons him after thirteen months, once Butler dies and there is no political reason—that is, no political obligation—to make the financier continue to pay.

In short, Butler and the written law never close accounts with the financier. Cowperwood never pays Butler the money he owes, never returns Aileen, never pays the full price for his crime, and, most importantly for Dreiser, never acknowledges the moral and civic pedagogy that is supposed to attend the law's discipline. "I have had my lesson," he notes to himself at the end of the book, but the lesson simply confirms how the law can't contain him: "They caught me once, but they will not catch me again" (*TF* 775). Moreover, his punishment doesn't change him. In the frenzy of the second panic, he is "perfectly calm, deadly cold, the same Cowperwood who had pegged solemnly at his ten chairs each day in prison" (771). Nor does his punishment diminish the relentless drive for profit that made him vulnerable to the law in the first place. Indeed, as I've noted, it enables him to recoup his losses and begin again, for he is able to exploit the second panic only because the court and his creditors, in the desire to make him pay, have shorn him of his entangling accounts, allowing him to operate freely in a falling market.

Cowperwood's case also exposes the limits of accountability in that the conventional law masks and enables the kind of illicit scheming it is meant to punish. From the start, the prosecuting lawyers and judges are all what Dreiser elsewhere calls "tools" of nature ("The Man" 167). Like Cowperwood, they advance their careers by incurring and paying off debts. "Owing to [their] political connections and obligations" (*TF* 630), they meet the demands of the city insiders who seek Cowperwood's conviction. In short, self-interest motivates the law's attempt at accounting. Indeed, self-interest thrives *because* of this accounting. Dreiser demonstrates this idea most clearly when the sheriff at the county jail accepts a bribe from Cowperwood's lawyer, who hopes to keep the financier out of jail for a few more days. When the jailer takes the money while offering to show the lawyer a "line of law-books" (640) in his prison office, we see that the very books that cover, or discuss, the financier's crime, also cover, or mask, the law's circumvention; they abet the opening of side (i.e. extra, extra-legal) accounts, and they do this at the very moment and the very place the financier seems most accountable.

## The Margins of Accounting

*The Financier* focuses not only on the margins of Cowperwood's financial accounts and legal and moral accountability but also on its own margins, its own literal and figurative borders. Two extraordinary features of the novel shed light on this narrative self-consciousness. The first is the novel's ending, a formally idiosyncratic wrapping-up that both signifies and reflects upon the impossibility of closing narrative accounts. The second is the surfeit of technical explication and philosophical rumination that frustrated Dreiser's editors at Harper's, who labored to distinguish the essential from the extraneous. These formal idiosyncrasies indicate neither a miserly incapacity to discard any research finding nor an unmanageable prolixity, even though in welcoming H. L. Mencken's offer to pare down the manuscript Dreiser seemed to confess his own helplessness.[6] Nor do they simply reflect a marketing decision about where to cleave the massive Cowperwood manuscript to produce a seemingly finished work. Rather, in keeping with the novel's repeated attention to forms and failures of accounting, they directly serve Dreiser's argument about the limits of genre. For *The Financier* overtly invokes the formulas of biography and biographical fiction in order to mark how it moves beyond them.

For its first 275 pages, up to the outbreak of the financial panic, Dreiser adheres closely to the narrative formulas of financial biography—very closely, in fact, for portions of Cowperwood's boyhood are plagiarized, as Philip Gerber has shown, from a 1907 biography of Jay Cooke, the famous Philadelphia financier ("Dreiser's Debt").[7] With the onset of the panic, however, the narrative suddenly abandons these conventions, most notably by narrowing its temporal scope, devoting its remaining five hundred pages to Cowperwood's accounting failure and its aftermath.

At this point, the novel begins to evoke the popular finance fiction of the day in order to challenge its didactic intentions. As Frederic Cooper explained in his review of *The Financier*, most finance novels follow a predictable formula: the hero rises, achieves success through "spectacular strokes of fortune," and falls as a result of some fatal mistake that "sends the whole carefully built structure tumbling, card-like, to the ground" (115). At the end, the hero, chastened by bankruptcy or dishonor, learns a moral lesson. Dreiser rejected this "Theory of Endings" (as Cooper titled his review). Despite the "religionists" and "moralists" and their metaphysics of duty, debt, and obligation, he believed that "there is scarcely a so-called 'sane,' right, merciful, true, just solution to anything" ("Hey Rub" 10). Even though *The Financier* roughly follows the popular formula, Cowper-

wood's early career fails to conform to any moral trajectory, and the only lesson Cowperwood learns at its end, as Cooper himself notes, is to avoid putting himself within the clutches of the law.

*The Financier*'s generic ambitions become clearest, perhaps, when we consider *The Financier* in relation to a biographical essay on Yerkes that Dreiser consulted when conducting his research (Lehan 98). The essay—"What Availeth It?"—was written by Edwin Lefèvre, a respected financial journalist and popular author of finance fiction whose Wall Street stories and novels always balance financial and moral accounts. In the Yerkes article, Lefèvre insists that both human and fictional plots achieve their meaning only in retrospect, when seen as closed wholes or complete arcs from a vantage beyond their ending: "The Great American Novel can be nothing but pages taken from the lives of Americans Who Do Things. Only in death is the moral of their tale plain. You read 'Finis' and then you begin to think. The glitter tarnishes; the jingle of the dollar ceases; envy is stilled. What remains?" Lefèvre wrote this brief biography, he explains, to illuminate the "lesson"—actually two lessons—taught by the death of the famous financier. One lesson is that "there must be, always in the builder, *the sense of Death.*" Individuals must always aim to gain prospect over their own lives by reviewing their careers as if from the grave, and, inspired by such a perspective, they must fulfill their "duty . . . to leave the world the better for [their] having lived" (836). Their end—their aim and their death—is to serve this public obligation. The other lesson is that Nature will take "revenge" (846) on those who, like Yerkes, "*had taken and not given*" (847). Thus when Yerkes died, his executors, instead of carrying out his will, sold his house and auctioned off his famous art collection. In death, he was forced to pay his debts.[8]

*The Financier*, although it deals only with Cowperwood's early career, rejects this zero-sum balancing, not only in its thematic preoccupation with unpaid debts but also in its failure to reach a conclusion in its three provisional endings. Only the first of these is actually part of the story. It sums up how Cowperwood takes advantage of the panic of 1873 and recoups the fortune he lost during the panic two years before. On first glance, this abrupt ending, occupying just fifteen pages, seems a satisfying, and satisfyingly conventional, way to complete the novel. Despite initial appearances, however, the ending clearly mocks the idea, axiomatic to "the Christian and other metaphysical idealists," that "disaster" signifies "repayment" or retribution for "things done in opposition to [their] code" ("Equation" 173). It also recapitulates one of the ongoing themes of the novel, that every effort to close accounts not only fails but also produces more accounting, more

balancing acts. In it, Dreiser moves us straight from an image of the gates locking behind Cowperwood as he exits the prison to an announcement that "the banking house of Jay Cooke . . . closed its doors" (*TF* 761). The pairing of these images allows us to see not only how one failure at payback (i. e., Butler's vengeance, the law's punishment) leads to another, more massive one (i.e., the "widespread ruin and disaster" [761] of borrowers in the panic of 1873) but also how the law's accounting actually enables Cowperwood to exploit others' debts, others' accounting failures. Cowperwood's fortune conveys no moral significance since he is simply acting out Nature's mandate to move forward, profit, and prey or be preyed upon by other natural creatures.

But even this conclusion doesn't conclude the novel, for Dreiser appends not just one but two endings that, instead of capping off the narrative, justify its open-endedness. The first of these extra accounts, "Concerning Mycteroperca Bonaci," is a short study of the black grouper, a fish whose power to camouflage itself exemplifies, for Dreiser, the values privileged by nature: "subtlety, chicanery, trickery" (*TF* 779). Dreiser justifies the essay by noting its "considerable value as an afterthought" (778). An afterthought is a remainder, something extraneous and yet accretive, building on what precedes it, indebted to it, marking its limits while also advancing them. We are perhaps meant to compare this afterthought with the moral reflection that, according to conventional moral bookkeeping, is supposed to steer the chastened financier in the future. (The passage about the "lesson" Cowperwood takes from his experience comes shortly before this essay on the grouper). However, "Concerning Mycteroperca Bonaci" mocks the notion of providence or an "overruling, intelligent, constructive" (779) intention that shapes the ends of men and nature. In "Secrecy—Its Value," an expanded version of the grouper essay, Dreiser insists that "Nature reveals Her secrets to no man" and that the project of understanding her "is all a process of inclusion, and hence exclusion." For this reason, her bookkeepers, to employ terminology relevant to *The Financier*, must constantly interrogate the margins of their accounts and ask, "How little included? And how much excluded?" (142).[9] These are precisely the questions that *The Financier*'s endings ask.

"Even the longest of novels must have an end," noted a reviewer of *The Financier* ("Traction" 97), but not even the "afterthought" about Nature's ends brings an end to the text. After he completed a draft of the novel, as Donald Pizer notes (*Novels* 161), Dreiser added a second postscript, "The Magic Crystal," which, rather than circumscribing the narrative that precedes it, offers a brief prospectus of the saga's remainder. The act of closing

accounts opens new ones—a textual necessity (and perhaps also a commercial one) when one ends the first volume of a trilogy but also a formal enactment of one of *The Financier*'s central ethical and narrative claims. One who had been "a mystic or a soothsayer," Dreiser writes, might have seen in "the mystic bowl" (*TF* 779) a future of wealth and power for Cowperwood and "a whole world reading with wonder, at times, of a given name" (780). Dreiser insists, though, that neither the fortune-teller's instruments nor the newspaper accounts envisioned by their means can reveal the full story of the financier's future. Despite all the propitious signs expected by the reader of a conventional success story, the upward and onward trajectory of Cowperwood's career after exiting prison obscures the fundamental incompleteness of a life that will end in "sorrow, sorrow, sorrow" (780).

Dreiser concludes the novel by asking, "What wise man might not read from such a beginning, such an end?" (*TF* 780). On first glance the question seems to suggest, against everything I've been arguing, that prospect is possible and that Cowperwood is made accountable after all. However, nothing in this coda suggests that Cowperwood deserves such sorrow. Indeed, the point of the last line, like the point of the epigraph from Richard III that opens the novel ("I came into the world feet first and was born with teeth. The nurse did prophesy that I should snarl and bite"), is that Cowperwood never becomes anything other than what he already was at birth. Like that of an animal studied in nature, his life simply expresses Nature's compulsions. It has no formal design, no moral end that its ending might reveal.

My final claim is more speculative—that Dreiser also calls attention to the limitations of conventional biographical and fictional accounting by encumbering the narrative with "the sheer mass of detail" (Cooper 116) that even reviewers who celebrated the novel found wearisome. "You wonder, for page after page, if there is any actual end to get to," wrote one reviewer ("A Literary Show" 123), a question many students, slugging through the comparatively zippy 1927 edition, echo today. Mencken asked, "Why give the speeches of the lawyers in full? Why describe so minutely the other prisoners sentenced with Cowperwood? . . . All of these things are well described, but they have nothing to do with the story" (Riggio 1: 99). As James Hutchisson details, Hitchcock cut out epigraphs, lengthy descriptions of financial operations, sections of turgid philosophizing, a whole chapter mingling quotations from artists and Dreiser's glosses, and other seemingly extraneous passages ("Creation" 247–53).

Considering that Dreiser consented to these changes and made cuts of his own, he seems to have agreed with these critics that the novel was too long. Close to the publication date, he even wrote Mencken, "If you think of

any whole chapter that could be taken out bodily, wire me" (Riggio 1: 102).[10] However, I want to suggest that despite the editorial pressure to reduce the manuscript, Dreiser bloated and encumbered his narrative on purpose. He wrote "with a hand that is unrestrained by any sense of the eternal fitness of things," as one reviewer chided (Edgett 235), because "things," not being eternally fit, could not be fit within conventional biographical or fictional form. The seeming marginality of passages on financial and legal accounting—and of the philosophical explanations that underwrite these kinds of accounting—directly serves Dreiser's argument about the limits of conventional narrative forms.[11] Mencken, despite his suspicion that Dreiser had "got drunk on his story" (qtd. in Hutchisson, "Creation" 255 n6), seems to have recognized this purposefulness, for he acknowledged, and indeed admired, how in *The Financier* "the irrelevant, in the long run, becomes, in a dim and vasty way, relevant" (Riggio 1: 99). What seems marginal is actually central; what seems outside the main account is actually inside it.

Within its diegesis and dramatized events, the novel focuses on the limits of conventional financial, legal, and ethical accountability. Extra accounts—Cowperwood's illicit side deals, the news accounts that spread panic, the brokers' margins created by the panic, the unpaid balances that sustain the narrative action—expose these limits. Dreiser's own extra accounts, expanding the novel, do the same thing. By including so much seemingly extraneous exposition, Dreiser provides a more capacious and flexible vehicle for conveying nature's unaccountability, its resistance to being brought to book. If Dreiser seems driven by an urge always to add more, to explain more, to stop and comment on his narrative, to go on endlessly, it is because in nature, accounts never close.

## Notes

1. Dreiser, *The Financier* (New York: Harper, 1912) 693. Unless otherwise indicated, future references to novel will be to this edition, which will be cited parenthetically as *TF*. Dreiser published a significantly pared-down version of the novel in 1927; it is over two hundred pages and fifteen chapters shorter than the 1912 edition. On the differences between the two editions, see Hutchisson (both essays) and Jett.

2. Dreiser provides a model for the nature special in *The Financier*'s famous account of the prolonged mortal combat between a lobster and a squid in a tank (10–14). Dreiser drew this aquatic scene from "A Lesson from the Aquarium," an

article he'd published in 1906 drawing explicit parallels between naturally cunning and merciless fish and captains of industry. In 1915, Stuart P. Sherman famously attacked Dreiser's imposition of a theory of animal behavior on human beings in "The Barbaric Naturalism of Mr. Dreiser." What Sherman saw as an artless insult to human nature, I see as Dreiser's self-conscious and painstaking generic experimentation. For an alternative view of the novel's craftsmanship, see Brennan.

3. Biography fails as a generic model for *The Financier* not simply because the life of an extraordinary individual is insufficiently broad to illuminate the web of interdependencies that turn cooperation into conflict in a panic, nor simply because the financier has no selfhood discrete from these social dynamics, but because biography—especially the financial kind in vogue around the turn of the century—privileges autonomous, self-determining subjects, not the career of an abstraction.

4. The manuscript, typescript, and page proofs can be found in the Theodore Dreiser Papers, University of Pennsylvania Rare Book and Manuscript Library. My thanks go to Nancy Shawcross, Curator of the collection, for her help in tracking down these versions of the headline.

5. Dreiser discusses Spencer's impact and ideas in *A Book About Myself* 457–58 and in one of his *Ev'ry Month* "Reflections" 240–42. For more on Spencer's influence on Dreiser, see Zanine. For an overview of Spencer's ideas and their wide influence in the United States, see Hofstadter 31–50. Of particular interest for my argument is Spencer's chapter on "The Multiplication of Effects" in *First Principles*, a book widely acknowledged as having had a profound influence on Dreiser's work. Here Spencer attributes the evolving complexity of the universe largely to how a "uniform force" coming into "conflict with matter" is "in part changed into forces differing in their directions; and in part . . . changed into forces differing in their kinds" (432). As these "ever-multiplying ramifications" spread, they eventually become "too minute to be appreciated" (433). Here, perhaps, is the philosophical basis for the "ever-multiplying ramifications" of the uncontainable will-to-account in *The Financier*.

6. See Dreiser's exchanges with Mencken between August and October 1912 in Riggio 1: 96–103.

7. Dreiser wrote many biographical sketches for *Success* in 1898 and 1899, many following the conventional formulas of struggle-and-success tales. These articles can be found in Hakutani, *Selected Magazine Articles of Theodore Dreiser* 111–201, and Hakutani, *Theodore Dreiser's Uncollected Magazine Articles* 39–98. See also Dreiser, "[O. S. Marden and Success Magazine"], as well as Blackstock and Pitofsky. For a related study that finds biography a model, but a limited one, for explaining Cowperwood, see Hughson 122–59.

8. In *The Titan*, Dreiser seems to poke deliberate fun at the ethics of Lefèvre's "What Availeth It?" Commenting on Cowperwood's desire to build a museum that

"might stand as a monument to his memory," Dreiser invokes Lefèvre's title: "Until he could stand with these men [the nation's most famous magnates], until he could have a magnificent mansion, acknowledged as such by all, until he could have a world-famous gallery, Berenice, millions—*what did it avail?*" (398; my emphasis). For an account of the relation between biography, death, and the "anticipation of retrospection" that organizes our reading of narrative, see Brooks 22–23.

9. For an analysis of the relation between the thematics of accounting's interminability and the Victorian novel's simultaneous compulsion toward and resistance to closure, as exemplified by *Bleak House*, see Miller 58–106. Miller attributes this resistance to "the insoluble, abiding mysteriousness of human and literary experience" (97), a mysteriousness, in any case, domesticated in his Foucaultian account by the disciplinary work of private novel reading. My argument is that *The Financier*, unlike *Bleak House*, overtly obviates the "shrewd administration of suspense" (88) that continually anticipates an "end of bafflement and the acquisition of various structures of coherence" (89). *The Financier* does not "reward" (91) the patience of the reader with the "payoff" (92) of closure.

10. In November, Dreiser wrote Mencken that "the book should have been cut 170 pages instead of 77" (Riggio 1: 103). Such apologies don't prove much about Dreiser's intentions in *The Financier*; they may only be Dreiser's way of conveying his thanks for his friend's editorial labor and critical commendation.

11. Critics frequently acknowledge the importance of the expository passages. Pizer, for example, argues that "the great bulk of detail is intrinsic both to character and to action" (*Novels* 177) and that it provides "that indefinable quality of fictional density, of a living canvas, which is one of the great achievements of the nineteenth-century novel" (178). However, no one, to my knowledge, has seen the inclusion of this material as reproducing or serving the philosophical argument of the novel. The compositional history of the novel lends support to my reading. As Pizer notes, in the summer of 1912 Dreiser decided "to dramatize rather than summarize" (164) Cowperwood's struggle against the city insiders after the panic and to move Butler's hiring of detectives to before the trial. For Pizer, the revision "enlivened a portion of the novel otherwise devoted to a tedious recounting of Cowperwood's post-collapse financial affairs" (164), but we might also see the new link between the insiders' accounting, Cowperwood's desire to pay his debts and stay afloat, and the detectives' surveillance as an indication of Dreiser's decision to make the will-to-account (and its limits) the thematic center of the novel. Dreiser also saved the speeches of the lawyers from cutting until the last moment, and he restored them in the 1927 edition (362 n25)—suggesting how integral criminal accountability was to the novel.

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# Literary Soul Mates?
# Dreiser, Hervey White, and *Quicksand*

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After the publication of *Jennie Gerhardt* in October of 1911, Almer Sanborn of the *Cleveland Leader* interviewed Theodore Dreiser in November and asked him which books he considered the world's greatest. As one would expect, he mentioned Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Balzac's *Père Goriot*, but he surprisingly included Hervey White's *Quicksand* (5).[1] This was not the first time that Dreiser mentioned the novel. A month before the Sanborn interview, he privately expressed to his secretary William Lengel his admiration for the novel while noting that few American books interested him (Elias 1: 121). Published in 1900 by Small, Maynard & Co., *Quicksand* chronicles the ill-fated Hinckley family's migration from New Hampshire to Iowa and finally to Kansas as they attempt to escape the tragedy and humiliation of their daughter Adelaide's forbidden relationship with a gypsy, which results in an unwanted pregnancy, and her subsequent death during childbirth. The child, Hubert, is not made aware of his real mother's identity and, instead, is forced into the ministry to atone for his illegitimacy. Essentially, the novel illustrates the intolerance, pettiness, and selfishness of religious zealotry and how it undermines and destroys human compassion, altruism, and understanding—traits ironically important to the Methodist doctrine that the Hinckleys revere.

*Quicksand*'s reputation as an important literary work rests solely upon Dreiser's endorsement since it has never been reprinted and scholars have ignored it. At the time, the *Bookman* described the novel as a "drab-coloured story of the humdrum, monotonous existence of a drab-coloured family. . . . [It] is too real. It shows the nakedness of the human soul without the beauty and the romance which we demand in our fiction" ("*Quicksand*" 511). Another reviewer from the *Book Buyer* also mistook the novel to be a romance rather than a work of realism, denouncing it for being "a wall of

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human miseries" ("Romance of Trouble" 13). Both critical commentaries provide some insight into why Dreiser thought highly of the novel. *Quicksand* does contain a rudimentary development of social, hereditary, and biological determinism. Nonetheless, these elements fail to explain why Dreiser, in his interview for the *Cleveland Leader*, chose to mention White's *Quicksand* over far more superior American authors writing in the same naturalistic vein such as Crane, Garland, Fuller, and Norris. Dreiser probably admired White's novel because he responded to its vivid illustration of the battle between paganism and religious convention (something Dreiser, as a child, witnessed frequently between his mother and father), its inadvertent depiction of his concept the "Equation Inevitable," and its deliberate criticism of Christian hypocrisy. Moreover, Dreiser likely had *Quicksand* in mind when he composed *The Bulwark* because both novels depict how theological dogma and excessive moralizing from a parent poorly prepare a child for a Darwinian world demanding a pragmatic and realistic disposition.

Besides Adelaide and Hubert, the Hinckley family consists of the parents, Elizabeth and Edward, and their remaining children, Sam, Libbie, and Mary. Another character and father figure to Hubert, Hiram Stubbs, periodically lives with or nearby the family after his own mother and father die. The story begins in Tamworth, New Hampshire, with Adelaide's pregnancy. Since Adelaide is only seventeen and the father, Rob Melendez, is an avowed pagan, the incident creates a scandal within the highly religious Hinckley family, so much so that after Adelaide's death, the family uproots to Iowa. Here, with Hubert's true identity safely kept a secret, the Hinckleys prosper and become prominent in the local Methodist community.

For most of the novel, Hubert is the central figure, with the family devoting their meager funds to send him to college and then to pursue a career as a minister—a rather prominent social position in small, mid-western communities at the time. However, Hiram's pagan influence and the intellectual freedom Hubert experiences in college create an internal conflict that causes him to defy his grandmother's wishes. Hubert decides to become a writer.

During his senior year, he meets a freshman, Maude Wheeler, with whom he falls in love. Shortly after Edward's death, Hubert, ashamed to tell his grandmother of his plans to forego the ministry, marries Maude and moves to Chicago with the hope that a large city with publishing houses will further his career. Unfortunately, he fails as an author, leaving him discontented and feeling guilt for having left his family, especially Elizabeth, behind. The couple decides to move back to Iowa, where Hubert believes

the change of scenery will inspire his writing. However, Libbie's hatred of Maude, Hiram's absence, and Elizabeth's perpetual pontificating make it impossible for Hubert to write well. In a final crescendo, Hubert receives another rejection letter from a publishing house, observes his grandmother reading his private, pagan manuscript, stumbles upon his wife's adulterous liaison with his uncle Sam, and discovers from Sam his real origin. In a fit of emotional despair Hubert hangs himself in the root cellar.

The novel concludes with Mary's fate. She abandons Hiram, her lifelong love, and moves with her mother and sister to Kansas, where, after Sam and Elizabeth die, she lives the remaining years of her life as an old spinster with Libbie. This rather bleak ending prompted the reviewer from the *Book Buyer* to comment, "Of all the personages there is barely a single one in the story who has not had his or her hours of poignant agony. It is only Hiram Stubbs who is finally fairly happy, and then he has made the sacrifice of his life-long affection" ("Romance of Trouble" 13).

Negative reviews, a somber exploration of humanity's shortcomings, and undertones of moral relativity kept *Quicksand* from achieving commercial success. Dreiser could have commiserated with Hervey White since he had a similar experience with *Sister Carrie*, whose publisher, Doubleday, Page & Co., objected to its content and did little to promote the novel. Dreiser's negative experience with Doubleday and the constant wrangling with publishers and genteel moralists who wanted to censor his novels, particularly *The "Genius,"* left him embittered. While corresponding with Edward Smith in late December 1920, Dreiser suggested that books with a realistic vision such as Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads*, Henry Blake Fuller's *With the Procession*, Will Payne's *The Story of Eva*, I. K. Friedman's *By Bread Alone*, Harold Frederic's *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, and White's *Quicksand* were deliberately neglected by "the iron hand of convention" (Elias 1: 329). He further pointed out to Smith the hypocrisy of the average American reader:

> No, distinctly our American world is unfriendly to letters in their best, or truly interpretive sense. An American, outside of business, cannot possibly look life in the face. In trade he will cheat, lie, swindle, lure, trap, slay and rob in every conceivable fashion, moving heaven and earth to destroy his competitor and seem better than he is, but when he reads or writes, assuming he can do either, he wants and expects the world to be pictured as a realm of surpassing excellence. In his books, all men must be honest, kind, and true; all women, but more especially his wife and daughters pure as driven snow. . . . Hence the writer of a serious interpretation of [the] Ameri-

> can is more or less of a scoundrel, a low fellow, of whom, I hope, I have the honor to be one. (Elias 1: 330)

White expressed his own frustrations in a 27 November 1911 letter to Dreiser: "You may not know that that book [*Quicksand*] was still born, or that my other three books published—with perhaps the exception of *Differences* have hardly a score of readers altogether."[2] What ultimately angered Dreiser was that most of the aforementioned writers, to make a living, abandoned realism and pandered to the romantic whims of the American reader. White himself quit publishing for ten years before printing four small volumes of romantic poetry from his own press. Indeed, the limited success *Differences* enjoyed was due to its overriding love story.[3] Its philanthropic heroine, Genevieve Radcliffe, the daughter of a wealthy Chicago clergyman, foregoes her lavish lifestyle to marry John Wade, an out-of-work, widowed mechanic struggling to support two small children.

Much of the conflict in *Quicksand* results from Elizabeth's staunch, fundamentalist approach to religion and Hiram's quiet, unassuming rejection of her zealotry. Hiram was not always at odds with formal religious practices and beliefs, but his encounter with Rob Melendez early in the novel—soon after Rob discovers Adelaide is pregnant—greatly affects him. While engaged in a heated exchange, Rob explains to Hiram that the Song of Solomon was an "expression of a man's love for a woman" (12). At first skeptical, claiming that the song shows Christ's love for the church, Hiram listens to Rob's view that what happened between Adelaide and him was simply love, something to be admired: "I suppose it is terrible with your religion, but to us it was only natural" (15). As the novel unfolds, the scene's importance to Hiram's ideological transformation becomes apparent. He eventually eschews the sterility of religious conventions for the spiritual edification often found in simple human compassion, tolerance, and mercy. That is, he follows what he believes to be right in his heart, not what Methodist doctrine instructs him to do. No passage better defines Hiram than his rejection of baptism. He tells Hubert, "I don't have any sins to take away. . . . I do what I think is right. . . . If God meant to damn me because I have a soul, why did he give me one?" (89-90). Hiram's belief in individual morality rather than one based on social mores and religious principles would have appealed to Dreiser.

Dreiser might also have identified with the relationship between Hiram and Elizabeth, for the parallels between them and his parents and even Hubert and himself are striking. As a youth, Dreiser remained under the influence of his father's fervent commitment to Catholicism, and well into his twenties, he believed in a higher being who governed a morally-ordered

universe anchored in justice. But much as Hubert and Hiram come to renounce Elizabeth's Christian dogma, Dreiser eventually wearied of John Dreiser's iron-fisted sermonizing. As he commented in *A Book About Myself*: "He was dosed with too much religion. It had seemed to me that he had become unduly wild on the subject of the church and the hereafter, was annoying us all with his persistent preachments concerning duty, economy and the like, the need of living a clean, saving, religious life" (250). In fact, Dreiser, most likely thinking of his father, writes in his philosophical essay "What I Believe" that "religion is in itself, not wholly an evil nor yet an unmixed good, but only an illusion of the rankest character, yet which for many at least has served as a nervous or emotional escape from a condition much too severe to be endured" (319). He related similar observations to Edward Smith: "That the mental woes of a certain type of individual may be eased, or made more tolerable, by subjection to even a gross illusion is undeniably true. My own father was an illustration of that. All dogmatic religion illustrates the truth of it. Religion is a bandage for sore brains" (Elias 1: 337). Thus, Dreiser probably viewed Elizabeth's obsessive devotion to the Methodist doctrine following Adelaide's indiscretion as an attempted escape from an inescapable reality.

After leaving home, Hubert, like Dreiser, embraces intellectual freedom and disdains the perfunctory behavior that is often a part of religious affairs. For example, Hubert briefly leaves college to witness his father's baptism, but the holy celebration becomes, at least for Hubert, a farce. Throughout the novel, his father resists being baptized, but the selfishness and constant goading of Elizabeth and Libbie force him to submit. Edward is to be converted in a cattle creek usually surrounded by flowers in full bloom, but on this day, it has rained, leaving the embankment soggy from the trampling of cattle. Hubert soon realizes the folly of the deacons and the preacher slopping around the muck performing what should be a spiritual ceremony but what ends up a charade. If anything, the environment could not be worse for a man dying of consumption, a thought that eludes the determined worshipers who believe that a soul must be saved at all costs. In the end, the scene clarifies for Hubert that truth can never be discovered in studying theological creeds and practicing religious rituals but rather in seeking to understand the complex order of nature and humanity's deterministic role within it. For Hubert, "nature, the mother-God, was speaking, and he [understood] her language" (116). His sudden epiphany at this event mirrors Dreiser's own intellectual enlightenment and subsequent development of his mechanistic philosophy while a young newspaperman witnessing the inhumanity on the streets of St. Louis and Pittsburgh and while reading the works of Jacques

Loeb, Herbert Spencer, and T. H. Huxley.

Though Dreiser found religion dogmatic, ritualistic, and often hypocritical, some scholars argue correctly that he still advocated its true spirit, namely the teaching of compassion, mercy, and tolerance. In other words, his mechanistic philosophy did not simply forego moral responsibility. W. A. Swanberg once observed that throughout his life Dreiser often "wavered between blasphemy and worship" ("Theodore Dreiser" 21). Even more, "his religious rearing had left him with an urgent need for a kindly personal God who rewarded noble effort and punished transgression" (Swanberg, *Dreiser* 61). In 1895, under the pseudonym "The Prophet," Dreiser wrote a column for the magazine *Ev'ry Month* called "Reflections" and often applied lessons learned from Christ's Sermon on the Mount to substantiate his moralistic view of the world, a view that not only included a mistrust of materialism and desire but also compassion for the poor. Hence, Dreiser would have appreciated Hiram Stubbs as a man who keeps the true spirit of religion but dismisses its ritualism and its hypocrisy. When Hiram returns to Iowa after a ten-year stint at sea, he reestablishes a relationship with the Hinckley family, purchases property next to them, and begins a quiet life as a farmer. Despite Elizabeth's objections and her ceaseless carping, he soon becomes a father figure to Hubert and a man who "finds worth in everybody, something to like or to study, no matter how low men might be—vagabonds, drunkards, or thieves" (44). Hiram invites tramps into his home, treats them as equals, and gives them a place to stay for as long as they wish. When they abuse his hospitality, he does not hesitate to knock them down, but he never lets his anger fester and always forgives them. He even shows a fair amount of tolerance for Elizabeth. In the face of her often vitriolic sermons, he gently repels her self-righteous indignation, turns the other cheek, and helps the Hinckley family with chores in the field. Above all, Hiram simply rejects organized religion and remains steadfast to his belief "that if we do the best we can in the world, and are honest and charitable with our neighbors, we will not take harm from what's to come" (41).

Following Hubert's suicide, the remaining members of the Hinckley family, at Elizabeth's urging, decide to sell the house and move to Kansas. Ironically, Hiram returns from Chicago to buy the Hinckley farm after adopting three children who lost their father in a railway accident. He decides to establish an orphanage in the home under the guidance of two friends who are parents. Elizabeth, with hypocrisy on her tongue and callousness in her heart, can only grimace and grumble that his friends are from the gutter and that she would rather "have her things burned than used by such people" (294). Tempted to rebuke her hatred, Hiram refrains and

still assists her family in the end, even arranging the wagon they will use in the journey in such a way that it will be more compact and comfortable. Again, unlike Elizabeth, Hiram does not rely on the mere rhetoric of religious doctrine; rather, he puts his faith in the humane actions of a good man.

Hiram's passive handling of Elizabeth possibly reminded Dreiser of how his mother Sarah dealt with his father. Though Vera Dreiser views Sarah as "a controlling mother who was self-preoccupied, to the extent that she could subject her children to difficulties beyond the scope of their sensibilities" (33), Dreiser reports his mother quietly worried about the family's well-being and worked steadily in various cleaning jobs to put food on the table. Apparently, part of Dreiser's animosity for Catholicism stemmed from his father's emphasis on religion rather than the welfare of the family, a trait Elizabeth Hinckley shares. Throughout his childhood and adolescence, Dreiser resented his father's inability to find and keep a job, and as an adult reflecting upon his upbringing, criticized him for squandering his health on religion instead of helping supplement the family income: "In health he was always fluttering to one or another of a score of favorite Catholic churches, each as commonplace as the other, and there, before some trashy plaster image of some saint or virgin as dead or helpless as his own past, making supplication for what?—peace in death" (*A Book About Myself* 244). As Swanberg points out, "among [Dreiser's] earliest reflections was the realization of the sharp schism between his mother's way of life and his father's, the schism between the pagan and the puritan; there was never any question as to whose side he was on" (*Dreiser* 9). For Dreiser, trusting religion rather than fortitude and courage to deliver one from a dour existence signified weakness and impracticality. He would have recognized and respected in Hiram the same resolve and self-sacrifice that he witnessed in his own mother. Just as Sarah allowed her husband's zealotry to quash any dreams she might have had for the good of the family, Hiram's behavior is similar in the face of Elizabeth's Bible-wielding rants; he willingly sacrifices many of his own desires, namely his love for Mary and the potential happiness that might have come with their marriage, for the good of the Hinckley family.

The idea that one force in life always brings about its opposite, or what Dreiser dubbed the "equation inevitable," pervades much of *Quicksand,* especially when Elizabeth's Puritanism gives rise to Hiram's paganism. As has been noted, Spencer and Loeb made Dreiser doubt the existence of a traditional God early in his life, thereby leading him to a mechanistic understanding of the world. Humans were simply cogs in a cosmic machine—

driven by forces beyond their control and thus deprived of free will. The only truth in life was that all matter, including humans, remained in constant flux and change, that life moved in a circle, in a continuous motion, but went nowhere.

By the time Dreiser's essay "Equation Inevitable" appeared in *Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* (1920), he believed in a creator who kept the universe in a state of equilibrium to minimize the oppressive nature of life. Extremes such as good and evil, love and hate, mercy and cruelty, tolerance and intolerance offset one another in a sophisticated mechanistic process that, though seemingly chaotic, maintained a balance. As Louis Zanine puts it, "Dreiser derived this peculiar notion of balance or 'equation' from the Spencerian doctrine of 'rhythm' that he absorbed from *First Principles*," but rather than the opposing forces being only of a physical and chemical nature, in "Dreiser's reinterpretation of Spencer, the opposing forces seeking 'equation' were positive and negative extremes of an emotional or qualitative nature" (88). Furthermore, Dreiser considered religious conventions and dogmatic morals out of place in his equation since human impulses "do not always accord with moral or religious law, the so-called will of the Creator here on earth, and yet our impulses are assuredly provided us by a Creator" (*Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* 161). In fact, Dreiser believed that the very best that religion can show "is no better than that which life, or Nature Herself, could and did long before any religion appeared, namely a rough equation, a balance struck" (*Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* 172). For Dreiser, the discovery of knowledge depended on an individual seeing life in terms of opposites, dismissing the idea of absolute values, and embracing moral relativity.

Elizabeth, believing that Adelaide's sin has left the family short of God's grace, makes it her mission to convince each member of the family to reaffirm his or her commitment to the Methodist community; this reaffirmation requires baptism. Fearful that her children and her husband will suffer eternal damnation if she fails to convince each of them to submit to this ritual, Elizabeth doggedly harasses them, regardless of the consequences. On the other hand, Hiram, after witnessing Elizabeth's impersonal if not cruel treatment of Adelaide during her pregnancy, rejects the religious conventions Elizabeth taught him as a child and becomes convinced that the correct path involves Rob Melendez's humanistic love for and acceptance of human beings as creatures spiritually interconnected to the natural world around them. Dreiser's notion that "the power of certain individuals to do is only limited by the power of certain individuals to resist" (*Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* 167) defines the antipodal relationship of Hiram and Elizabeth. Neither truly gains a superior position in the relationship. Hiram might enjoy an in-

fluential grip on Hubert and entice Mary to desire his hand in marriage, which culminates in Hiram's purchase of the Hinckley farm before they move to Kansas. But in the end, Elizabeth convinces Mary not to abandon her, thereby leaving Hiram without the one person that could make him happy rather than merely content. Here, we see in Hiram and Elizabeth how the "extremities of one kind [are] balanced against the extremities of another" (*Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* 167). Moreover, the determination of Elizabeth and Hiram to disprove each other's philosophical views divests them of free will and guarantees little chance for genuine reconciliation, a result that, from Dreiser's point of view, would have validated the determinism also present in his mechanistic philosophy. If nothing else, he would have appreciated their antagonism, for as Shawn St. Jean observes, Dreiser's own contribution to literature was casting America as "a battleground between holdover, pagan forces and conventional or Christian forces" (182).

Dreiser spent much of his life attempting to learn more about the mysteries of life in the universe and how humans figured into his equation. He queried the scientific community to substantiate his mechanistic philosophy, hoping that leading scientists of his day could answer questions about whether any evidence exists to reveal the presence of a Creative Intelligence that designed and directed the material world. In July 1928, he visited the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where he mingled with S. C. Brooks, professor of zoology at Berkeley, cell physiologists Robert Chambers of New York University and L. V. Heilbrunn of the University of Michigan. Zanine points out that cell physiology in particular fascinated Dreiser to such an extent that "the uniformity of the cellular composition of all living material would in later years lend support to [Dreiser's] belief in a creative plan that expressed itself in all life" (151). His most significant friend in the scientific community was Calvin Blackman Bridges, a member of the *Drosophila* group that won the Nobel Prize in physiology in 1933. Dreiser often debated with him about the role of science in understanding the nature of existence, but Bridges argued that science could only answer the *how*, not the *why* in matters concerning the function of the natural world. Dreiser eventually grew frustrated with physicists and biologists, claiming in his essay "What I Believe" that "there can be no *Why* but only a *How*, since to know *How* disposes finally of any possible *Why*" (279). By the mid to late 1930s, Dreiser, as Zanine notes, had accepted the mechanistic conception of the universe but disagreed with mechanistic scientists who claimed that no Creative Force permeated the mechanisms of nature (158). At this time Dreiser also began to read scientists who tried to reconcile science with religion, such as Robert Millikan,

winner of the Nobel Prize in 1923 for his isolation of the electron. Dreiser wrote Millikan and others to ask about the possibility of a Creative Force, but he never received a truly satisfying response. Dreiser's belief in a Creative Intelligence, which originated from his admiration of the design, beauty, and aesthetics of nature, emerges in his novel *The Bulwark.*

Dreiser began writing *The Bulwark* in 1914, a time when he held his greatest contempt for religion, and fittingly, three years after he first acknowledged *Quicksand* as one of his favorite novels. He originally intended Solon Barnes, the central figure in *The Bulwark* and a character, who, for most of the novel, eerily resembles Elizabeth Hinckley, to be a tragic figure. Solon's stubborn, narrow-minded fixation on his religious principles keeps him from accepting reality, leading Dreiser to describe him as one who "could never be anything but the serious, dignified father, always examining papers, partaking of solemn meals, engaged in weighty conversations, and always with a heavy, cautious, humorless attitude toward everything" (*The Bulwark* 249). Thus, when he abandons the true, humanitarian spirit of his Quaker faith and, instead, becomes entrenched in its dogmatism and prescriptive codes, Solon can neither understand nor accept the adverse effects of modern life on his children. Likewise, Elizabeth does not allow her children to live, to become individuals; she suffocates them with her conventional moralism and religious maxims. She, in fact, illustrates White's belief that "religion does more to make people selfish than any other factor except selfishness in the complex make-up of humanity" (234). Her despotic disposition and sanctimonious intolerance with her children forces two of them, Mary and Libbie, to sacrifice their future lives and the other two, Sam and Hubert, to waver in their faith. One commits adultery and the other, before taking his life, pursues intellectual freedom apart from the Methodist doctrine. Like Solon, Elizabeth can neither deal with human nature nor the determinism often present in the decisions her children make.

The parallels between the children of Solon and Elizabeth are indeed interesting, enough to speculate that though the Barnes family, as Donald Pizer puts it, "is a semi-idealized version of Dreiser's own family" (*Novels of Theodore Dreiser* 301), he might also have had White's Hinckley family in mind. For instance, Solon's daughter Etta is much like Hubert. Both have grown tired of their parents' overly confining view of life. Etta is described as "too intuitive, too poetic" (109). For her, "the world was enthrallingly beautiful . . . the sun rising and setting, the rain pattering against the window pain; the wind rustling through the trees. It was all so beautiful" (131). Similarly, Hubert composes lines of poetry that frequently include his love of nature. While at college, Volida, a rather progressive friend of Etta's, en-

tices her to judge Solon's brand of Quakerism as archaic. She prefers that Etta think and do for herself. Hubert experiences the same transformation after meeting his future wife, Maude, in college.

Solon's son Stewart and Hubert share a similar relationship to a dominant parent, rebel against religious conventions, and suffer the same fate. Feeling the pressure of his father's expectations for his future, Stewart resists, allowing his passions and desires, particularly with young women, to control his life. He visits vaudeville houses and seeks sexual gratification at every opportunity. Eventually, he resorts to stealing money from his mother and brother and, in the end, participates in drugging a woman as a means of taking sexual advantage of her—only to have her die. Suffering from the thought of having disappointed his father, Stewart, rather than accepting responsibility for his act, commits suicide. Unbeknown to Elizabeth, Hubert has forsaken the ministry and even his faith while pursuing a literary career and a love affair with Maude. The pressure of his grandmother's fundamentalism is "crowding the joy and the poetry out of his heart" (235). As a result, the same religious zealotry that drove Stewart away from his father and his Quaker beliefs drives Hubert away from his grandmother and his Methodist upbringing. Discovering his brother's liaison with his wife soon after returning to Iowa from Chicago is difficult enough, but what ultimately steers him to the same fate as Stewart is Elizabeth stumbling upon his pagan novel. He simply cannot bear disappointing her, especially since the family sacrificed a great deal for him to attend college and study theology.

Libbie Hinckley, on the other hand, shares many of the same ambitions as Solon's daughter Dorothea and his son Orville. Both Orville and Dorothea champion social prominence and engage in social climbing to attain a good marriage and wealth while adhering superficially to the Quaker faith. Libbie, similarly, longs for her father to be more important in the community and attempts to persuade him to enter county politics by way of an official position on the local school board. Later, she frequently laments that society perceives the family as isolated, conceited, and peculiar in light of her father's unwillingness to be baptized and Hubert's reluctance to become a preacher. That is, Libbie outwardly feigns religious formalism but privately sacrifices her Methodist beliefs at the altar of human pettiness and social envy. The subjugation of her religious principles by an uncontrollable desire for material gratification and social prominence provides the novel with a deterministic insight into the human condition that would have secured Dreiser's approval.

However, Dreiser did not complete *The Bulwark* until shortly before his death in 1945, long after his contemptuous outlook on religion had been re-

placed with his scientific belief in a Creative Intelligence. Scholars often point to Solon's encounter with nature along the Lever Creek at Thornbrough, specifically his encounter with a puff adder and his observation of a green fly eating a flower bud, as key occurrences reaffirming Solon's belief in the universal presence of a Creative Force with a purpose behind the beauty, tragedy, and variety of life. Thus, in the novel's final version, Dreiser allows Solon not only to recognize the redemptive qualities of human compassion but also how human life is an integral part of nature's design. Solon eventually resigns his position at the bank, shuns the American preoccupation with materialism, and defends the poor, an ending reminiscent of Dreiser's moralistic views as "The Prophet." Pizer concludes that "Dreiser's portrayal of Solon's renewal of faith as a discovery of a pantheistic truth is thus both fictionally inept and thematically appropriate" (*Novels of Theodore Dreiser* 325).

Solon's character basically becomes less like Elizabeth and more like Hiram at the end of *The Bulwark*. His recognition of a Creative Divinity and the peace he finds when he begins to understand the aesthetic beauty and design of nature and human life reflect Dreiser's own views in his essay "My Creator," written in 1943: "[D]esign, however one may feel concerning some of it, is the great treasure that nature or the Creative Force has to offer man and through which it seems to emphasize its own genius and to offer the knowledge of the same to man" (*Notes on Life* 332). A passage similar to Solon's encounter at Lever Creek occurs in *Quicksand* when Hiram and Hubert are working on the Hinckley farm during the winter. Both are "curious of the workings of nature, and wanted reasons in language of cause and effect" (60). Hiram breaks off a piece of ice from a river and, turning it over in his hand, ponders "how the water had cut little intricate channels for itself and lingered in icy palaces and corridors, [and speculates] on how a certain rapidity of flow would cut this channel, while a slower flow would cut another quite different" (61). Essentially, Hiram's appreciation for nature's systematic order and beauty allows him to understand how his fatherly relationship with Hubert and his role as a buffer to Elizabeth's zealotry is also a part of nature's grand design.

Interestingly, Solon and Hiram's recognition of the wonder, variety, and beauty in nature's design further suggests an Emersonian connection between Dreiser and White. Near the end of his life and when he was finishing *The Bulwark*, Dreiser, as Zanine posits, saw the similarity between his pantheistic conception of an immanent creator and Emerson's transcendentalism, particularly his notion of an Over-soul (180–1). Both *Quicksand* and *The Bulwark* illustrate Emerson's belief that the "globe and universe are

rude and early expressions of an all-dissolving Unity" ("Beauty" 479) and that "elegance of form in bird or beast, or in the human figure, marks some excellence of structure . . . that in the construction of any fabric or organism, any real increase of fitness to its end, is an increase of beauty" ("Beauty" 471). Besides Solon's experience at Lever Creek, Emerson's "all-dissolving Unity" can especially be seen in the passage where Hiram ponders the interconnectedness of elements in nature while sitting next to a brook. He notes "the plants that grew beside it, and how they were protected from the cold, and what was taking charge of the sowing of seeds, the wind, perhaps, blowing the fluffy ones, the tiny hooks that others had for clinging, the mice and squirrels that did their share to help out their big friends, the trees" (61).

Unlike Hiram, Hubert goes to college, discontinues his attachment to nature, and after exhausting what he can remember from his childhood experiences with Hiram in the surrounding countryside, has very little to write about anymore. Conversely, Hiram, having recognized his humanitarian place in the natural world, which involves assisting the down-trodden, thus may have suggested Dreiser's assertion in his essay "A Confession of Faith" that "there exists some strange link between beauty and happiness; between kindness and a sense of peace" (Pizer, *Theodore Dreiser* 182). In the dénouement, Hiram's sense of peace, despite his loss of Mary and the tragedy of Hubert, who fails to find the natural world's purpose for him, illustrates Dreiser's view, as Pizer puts it, that "God, or Creative Energy, is alive in every creature, binding all men and all living objects in an infinitely varied but interwoven design of beauty and tragedy, good and evil, and every man has the power to sense this design either in nature or in human relations themselves" (*Novels of Theodore Dreiser* 326). In other words, Hiram accepts what the natural world has in store for him; regardless of the tragedies often involved, he recognizes the beauty and purpose in everything, including what occurs within the ebb and flow of human relationships.

One recurrent element in *Quicksand* that would have further appealed to Dreiser, particularly in 1911, would be White's rather sarcastic condemnation of Christian hypocrisy and its potential destructiveness. Dreiser despised Christian hypocrisy, observing in *Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* that "with one hand the naïve American takes and executes with all the brutal insistence of Nature itself; with the other he writes glowing platitudes concerning brotherly love, virtue, purity, truth" (272). Dreiser could never fully comprehend how American culture could promote Christian notions of virtue, honesty, self-sacrifice, and altruism while life seems to demand a self-

ish disposition just to survive. Therefore, he quickly came to believe that the world had "trussed itself up too helplessly with too many strings of conventional, religious dogma" (*A Book About Myself* 326) and that ethics and religion, at best, "are but one face of a shield which is essentially irreligious and unethical as to its other face, or the first would not exist" (*Hey Rub-A-Dub-Dub* 90). Elizabeth Hinckley represents the Christian hypocrite that Dreiser would praise White for condemning in his novel.

Rather than attempting to improve relationships between members of her family and with Hiram, Elizabeth spends her time at revivals, taking heed of the weeping, praying, and overall emotional chaos brought on by preachers looking to coerce doubters into finding salvation through conversion to the Methodist faith. At the same time, her hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness abound. For those, like Libbie's beau, Oliver, who seeks to change a bad life to a good life, Elizabeth purposely avoids encouragement and comments, "A bad habit will always return" (58). In fact, her attempts to push Hubert into the ministry and her husband Edward into baptism are born from a self-serving ego. One can even argue that Elizabeth's selfishness and lack of compassion for her husband cause his premature death. When he initially shows symptoms of tuberculosis, Hiram offers to take Edward to a mining camp in Arizona for a much needed respite, but Elizabeth convinces Libbie and then the rest of the family to demand that he stay, fearing that Hiram will turn Edward into an atheist and claiming that the family would have to answer for his soul on Judgment Day. Edward's health becomes nothing more than an afterthought.

Despite their outward adherence to Christian ethics, Sam's adulterous affair with Maude and Elizabeth's lies concerning Hubert's origin ultimately cause Hubert to commit suicide. Soon after Hubert moves back to Iowa from Chicago and is forced to endure his mother's incessant sermonizing, White criticizes Elizabeth's oppressive fundamentalism: "By religion is meant what is commonly understood by that term,—not the higher inner conscience of Deity moving and ruling in all things, but that outward expression of piety of the common orthodox type; the belief in the plan of salvation, and that the believer is saved, though the hearer's case is still pending" (234). Elizabeth is convinced that Hubert's return home will somehow renew his interest in the ministry. Meanwhile, she conveniently casts aside her guilt for deceiving him about his mother to make room for her own reckless pursuit of the family's salvation. In other words, Elizabeth's hypocrisy keeps her from recognizing her culpability and realizing that the case for her own salvation "is still pending." Simply telling Hubert the truth and accepting him, the Christian thing to do, might have saved her from a

bitter existence.

Though *Quicksand* never found a reading audience, it did capture Dreiser's attention. White's vision of the American cultural landscape at the turn of the century, especially in its depiction of the antagonism between religious conventions and the moral relativity characterized by Hiram Stubbs, would have appealed to Dreiser's own philosophical views. He would have also taken to heart the similarities between the Hinckley family and his own, its partial illustration of his notion of "equation inevitable," and the novel's condemnation of Christian hypocrisy. Considering the extensive scholarship on how the fiction of Balzac, Zola, Hardy, Dickens and other important European novelists influenced Dreiser, it would seem prudent to understand what Dreiser admired about less significant American writers such as Hervey White. This can only assist scholars in better discerning Dreiser's philosophical interests and their application to his fiction.

## Notes

1. Examining Dreiser's unexpected recommendation of *Quicksand* necessitates a brief biography of its relatively obscure author. Hervey White was born in 1866 in New London, Iowa, to a poor farming family. After his mother died when he was three, he moved in with his aunt and attended local schools. At twelve, the family moved to western Kansas, and it is here that Hervey attended Stockton Academy and the University of Kansas. He saved money while teaching in the local schools until he could afford to attend Harvard, completing his degree in 1894. At Harvard, he became friends with Charlotte Perkins, a leading feminist and author of the often anthologized short story "The Yellow Wallpaper." Eventually moving to Chicago in 1895, he joined the Bureau of Charities, accepted the position of reference librarian in the John Crerar Library, and became both a supporter and resident of Jane Addams' Hull House. His friendship with Perkins led to his meeting Ralph Whitehead, and together in 1900 they formed the important Byrdcliffe Colony in Woodstock, New York, a place where many well-known artists and authors made their summer homes. White left the colony after its second year and established the Maverick Colony, which provided opportunities in the form of music and art festivals to raise money and provide exposure for actors and musicians. He started the Maverick Press a short time later and used it to publish books of lesser-known writers and the literary periodicals *Wild Hawk* and *Plowshare*. White served as editor on both and even solicited Dreiser for a manuscript. To my knowledge, Dreiser never complied.

2. White to Dreiser, 27 Nov. 1911, Theodore Dreiser Papers, University of Pennsylvania Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Quoted with permission of the

Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania.

3. *Quicksand* was White's second novel, the first being *Differences* (1899), a settlement novel capitalizing on the reputation of Jane Addams' Hull House to depict graphically the poor socio-economic conditions that Chicago's labor classes endured in the late 19th century.

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# A Dreiser Checklist, 2002–2003

**Roger W. Smith**

This checklist supplements *Theodore Dreiser: A Primary Bibliography and Reference Guide*, by Donald Pizer, Richard W. Dowell, and Frederic E. Rusch (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1991). It attempts to include all significant primary and secondary works published in the years 2002 through 2003. This bibliography will also be published on the *Dreiser Studies* website: <http://www.uncw.edu/dreiser/studies/>.

As was the case with past checklists, this update does not include publications in which Dreiser is given only passing mention, nor does it include reviews of secondary sources. It does, however, include articles that contain nuggets of biographical detail (no matter how slight) that are not derivative, personal reminiscences about Dreiser, or excerpts from Dreiser's correspondence and books and articles that include brief original critical insight or comment on Dreiser or his works. When the relevance to Dreiser is not otherwise clear from the title, items receive brief annotations. Internet publications are not included.

For cross-referencing, each item in the checklist is preceded by an alphanumeric or numeric identifier that essentially follows the system used by Pizer, Dowell, and Rusch in *Theodore Dreiser: A Primary Bibliography and Reference Guide*. For book reviews, cross-references are provided parenthetically after the title of the book being reviewed. For reprints and collections of essays, they follow the complete citation. Publications by or about Dreiser (including translations of his works) in languages other than English have not been cited. They will be covered in a future update.

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## OVERLOOKED ITEMS IN PREVIOUS DREISER CHECKLISTS

Eaton, Mark A. "Moving Pictures and Spectacular Criminality in *An American Tragedy* and *Native Son*." *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 27 (2000): 399–426.

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**2003**

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2002.49. Wetzsteon, Ross. *Republic of Dreams: Greenwich Village: The American Bohemia*, 1910–1960. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002. 297–303.

2002.50. Wolman, William, and Anne Colamosca. *The Great 401(k) Hoax: Why Your Family's Financial Security Is at Risk, and What You Can Do About It*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 2002. 73–74. Comments on trenchant criticisms made by Dreiser in the 1920s of the economic infrastructure in the United States. "Dreiser . . . acted as an invaluable and realistic literary bridge—from the 'feel-good' 1920s to an America reeling under the depression."

**2003**

2003.1. Amrane, Nadjia. "Theodore Dreiser's Relevance to the Modern Moslem World." *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 44–56.

2003.2. Arnold, Gary. "Stevens' Son Lauds 'Shane' at Silver." *Washington Times* 17 Oct. 2003: D08. Mentions that George Stevens Jr., son of the director of *A Place in the Sun*, while in high school was employed as a reader for Paramount, in which capacity his first assignment was to "break down," or prepare a summary of the characters and plot of, Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* for the updated movie version of the novel.

2003.3. Ashton, Susanna. *Collaborators in Literary America, 1870–1920*. New York and Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 97.

Notes that "The Gold Mine," a play by Brander Matthews and George Jessop, sparks Carrie Meeber's first interest in the theater. "Dreiser's use of Matthews and Jessop's play was but a passing reference in *Sister Carrie*, but it spoke volumes. Carrie's appreciation for 'A Gold Mine' was a testament to her own naiveté and intellectual limitations."

2003.4. Brittan, Lorna K. M. "Pressured Identities: American Individualism in the Age of the Crowd." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton U, 2003. *DAI* 64.2 (2003): 498A. Explores the radical reconception of American individualism by major realist writers at the beginning of the twentieth century. " 'As yet more drawn than she drew': *Sister Carrie*'s Object Lessons" (thesis chapter).

2003.5. Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. 33–34. Compares the title character of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and the lead character in Zola's novel *Au Bonheur des Dames*, noting the effect retail objects have on Carrie Meeber and how they represent a source for her of animation and individuation.

2003.6. Brownell, Joseph W., and Patricia W. Enos. *Adirondack Tragedy: The Gillette Murder Case of 1906*. 3rd ed. Utica, NY: Nicholas K. Burns, 2003.

2003.7. Cain, William E. "Dreiser's Monster and Alter Ego, Driven by Desire." *Boston Globe* 20 July 2003: D8. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1).

2003.8. ———. "Intellectuals, Cultural Critics, Men and Women of Letters." *The Cambridge History of American Literature: Volume 5, Poetry and Criticism 1900–1950*. Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 2003. 459–60. Discusses H. L. Mencken's role, as critic and essayist, in preparing the way for Dreiser, defending Dreiser the artist, and aiding his development as a novelist.

2003.9. Campbell, Donna M. "Fiction: 1900 to the 1930s." *American Literary Scholarship: An Annual, 2001*. Ed. Gary Scharnhorst. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2003. 305–42. (Dreiser, pp. 311–15.)

2003.10. Capo, Beth Widmaier. "Inserting the Diaphragm In(to) Modern American Fiction: Mary McCarthy, Philip Roth, and the Literature of Contraception." *Journal of American Culture* 26.1 (2003): 111–23. Notes that Dreiser was a supporter of the birth control movement and observes that he "implicitly argues for birth control" in *Sister Carrie*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, and *An American Tragedy*. Observes that censorship

affected his treatment of the subject and that an explicit reference to contraceptive devices was edited out of the original draft of *Jennie Gerhardt*.

2003.11. Crisp, Constance June. "Revisions Restored: Textual Restoration in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*." Master's thesis, Georgia Southern U, 2003.

2003.12. David-Fox, Michael. "The Fellow Travelers Revisited: The 'Cultured West' through Soviet Eyes." *Journal of Modern History* 75.2 (2003): 300–35. Discusses Dreiser's visit to the Soviet Union in 1927–28 and his views (as stated in *Dreiser Looks at Russia*) examined from several angles: his association of Russia and the USSR with Asianness and Asiatic stereotypes; his perception of American economic superiority vis-à-vis Russian backwardness; his "frankly racial and national condemnation of the Slavic or Russian 'temperament'"; his tendency to generalize about the Soviet experiment based on the particulars of his own experiences as a traveler; etc.

2003.13. Davies, Jude. 'Gender, Class, and Visibility in *An American Tragedy*, the Symbolic Drawings of Hubert Davis, and *A Place in the Sun*." *Dreiser Studies* 34.1 (2003): 3–34.

2003.14. Denby, David. "The Cost of Desire." *New Yorker* 79.9 (21 & 28 Apr. 2003): 178–84. Review-essay of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1).

2003.15. Donovan, Nancy McIlvaine. "Susan Smith: An 'American Tragedy' Narrative Retold." *Dreiser Studies* 34:1 (2003): 58–65.

2003.16. Dos Passos, John. *Travel Books and Other Writings 1916–1941*. New York: Library of America, 2003. 383, 385. Contains brief references to Dreiser in "Harlan County Sunset" (reprint of 1931.29).

2003.17. Dunleavy, Linda. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1). *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 123–24.

2003.18. Duvall, John Michael. "Processes of Elimination: Waste and American Fiction at the Turn of the Twentieth Century." Ph.D. dissertation, U of Maryland, 2003. *DAI* 64.6 (2003): 2083A. Examines how questions of waste are examined in naturalist narratives by Dreiser, Edith Wharton, Frank Norris, and Upton Sinclair and suggests new ways of engaging with naturalism's keen interest in consumable objects and consumable people. "(F)utility and Dinginess: Wasting and Being Wasted in Wharton's *House of Mirth* and Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*" (thesis chapter).

2003.19. Gerber, Philip. "Whither Naturalism?" *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature 40. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003. 367–89. Comments on Dreiser's central place in the development of a naturalistic ethos, with particular reference to *Sister Carrie*. Discusses how mechanistic theories of existence, particularly Dreiser's concept of "chemism," profoundly influenced his work and how these theories relate to current developments in biological science.

2003.20. Grauke, Kevin Ross. "Witness to Self-Destruction: Suicide and Class in Post-Bellum American Realist Fiction." Ph.D. dissertation, State U of New York at Buffalo, 2003. *DAI* 64.8 (2004): 2888A. Examines representations of suicide in Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*, Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, and Wharton's *Ethan Frome*.

2003.21. Hapke, Laura. "No Green Card Needed: Dreiserian Naturalism and Proletarian Female Whiteness." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature 40. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003. 128–43.

2003.22. Harris, Luther S. *Around Washington Square: An Illustrated History of Greenwich Village*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003. 197. Mentions, in a section on the Provincetown Players, that Dreiser's play *The Hand of the Potter* bombed, losing money and alienating the theater company's supporters.

2003.23. Hart, Jeffrey. "Dreiser in 1925." *The New Criterion* 21.10 (2003): 26–31.

2003.24. Henderson, Clayton W. *On the Banks of the Wabash: The Life and Music of Paul Dresser*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 2003. passim.

2003.25. Hoeller, Hildegarde. "Herland and Hisland: Illness and 'Health' in the Writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Theodore Dreiser." *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 24–43.

2003.26. Hogue, Bev. "Forgotten Frontier: Literature of the Old Northwest." *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. 241. "Dreiser exults in the energy of cities like Cleveland and Chicago, but depicts them as grinding down the wills of weak characters and strengthening the ruthless; Dreiser may create hidden refuges of pastoral delight within the heart of this urban wasteland, but the pastoral is squeezed into insignifi-

cance by the city's irrepressible growth."

2003.27. Hutchisson, James. "Dreiser Treads the Boards." *TEXT* 15 (2003): 410–18. Review of *The Collected Plays of Theodore Dreiser* (AA2000.1).

2003.28. Juras, Uwe. "The 'Culture of Personality' and Its Representations in the American Novel: A Transdisciplinary Analysis Spotlighting the Works of Theodore Dreiser and F. Scott Fitzgerald." Ph.D. dissertation, Johannes Gutenberg U, Mainz, Germany, 2003.

2003.29. Kazin, Alfred. "Two Evaluations: Edith Wharton and Theodore Dreiser." *Alfred Kazin's America: Critical and Personal Writings.* Ed. Ted Solotaroff. New York: HarperCollins, 2003: 65–80. Reprint of 1940.11 and 1942.13.

2003.30. Koeppel, Fredric. "Tragedy Flawed, But Still Classic." *The Commercial Appeal* (Memphis, TN) 25 May 2003: F2. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1).

2003.31. Larson, Erik. *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America*. New York: Crown, 2003. 305–306, 382. Briefly discusses Dreiser's trip as a reporter to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 and his romance with Sara Osborne White.

2003.32. Lears, Jackson. *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*. New York: Viking, 2003. 186. Comments on how the centrality of chance in S*ister Carrie* shapes human fate.

2003.33. Lee, James Kyung-Jin. "The City as Region." *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. 139. Briefly discusses how Dreiser's "equation inevitable," "borrowed extensively from Herbert Spencer's recalibration of Darwin's theory of evolution," is used in *Sister Carrie* and relies on a "scientific, zero-sum *deus ex machina*: in order for Carrie to rise in wealth and ambition, Hurstwood must fall."

2003.34. Levine, Gary Martin. "Populist Naturalism: The 'Natural' Markets and 'Unnatural' Jews of Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and Mark Twain." *The Merchant of Modernism: The Economic Jew in Anglo-American Literature, 1864–1939*. New York: Routledge, 2003. 67–80. Originally presented as the author's dissertation (1999.33).

2003.35. Lingeman, Richard. "Theodore Dreiser." *American Rebels*. Ed. Jack Newfield. New York: Nation, 2003. 165–71.

2003.36. Loving, Jerome. "Theodore Dreiser, 1871–1945." *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies. Retrospective Supplement II (James Baldwin to Nathanael West)*. Ed. Jay Parini. New York: Scribner's, 2003. 93–110.

2003.37. Madsen, Karine. "A Study of the Narrator's Presence in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*: Voice, Function and Metaphoric Language." Master's thesis, U of Bergen, Bergen, Norway, 2003.

2003.38. Marquis, Margaret. "The Female Body, Work, and Reproduction in Deland, Cather, and Dreiser." *Women's Studies* 32.8 (2003): 979–1000.

2003.39. Meurer, Robin. "Based on a Novel by Theodore Dreiser: *Sister Carrie* on the Screen." Master's thesis, Graz U, Graz, Austria, 2003.

2003.40. Neubauer, Gregory M. Review of *Theodore Dreiser's Uncollected Magazine Articles, 1897–1902* (D2003.3). *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 114–16.

2003.41. Newlin, Keith, ed. *A Theodore Dreiser Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2003.

2003.42. Nobel, Philip. "Peaceable Kingdom: Celebrating Craftsmanship and Nature in New York." *Architectural Digest* 60.6 (2003): 224–31, 256. Portrays renovation of Iroki, Dreiser's former home and estate in Westchester County, New York, by the current owners, Michael and Judy Steinhardt.

2003.43. O'Brien, Geoffrey. "His Place in the Sun." *Bookforum* 10.2 (2003): 36. Discusses Dreiser's style. "To read Dreiser is to become aware of a flat declamatory tone apparently unconcerned with niceties of style. He has been described as the kind of writer who triumphs over his own deficiencies of style, and as a writer who rummages through his characters' thoughts with the impatient thoroughness of a child left alone to explore the contents of an attic."

2003.44. Pizer, Donald. "Is American Literary Naturalism Dead? A Further Inquiry." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature 40. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003. 390–404. Compares works by the contemporary naturalist writers Raymond Carver, Paul Auster, and Don DeLillo to *Sister Carrie*, Dreiser's story "The Second Choice," and two of his sketches, "The Loneliness of the City" (C05-10) and "The Man on the Sidewalk" (C09-13).

2003.45. Pritchard, William H. "Theodore Dreiser's Behemoth: Reissuing Novel That Once Was a Bestseller." *Washington Times* 9 Mar. 2003: B8. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1).

2003.46. Puente, David Loren. "Education in Irony: United States 'Literacy Crisis' and the Literature of American *Bildung*." Ph.D. dissertation, U of California, Irvine, 2003. *DAI* 63.11 (2003): 359A. Traces historical shifts in the way educational development, intellectual ability, and pedagogic work were imagined by Americans between the Civil War and World War I, focusing on works by Henry James, Dreiser, James Weldon Johnson, and Willa Cather. "Naturalist *Bildung*: Genius and Stupidity in *Sister Carrie*" (thesis chapter).

2003.47. Rasmussen, R. Kent, and R. Baird Shuman, eds. *Cyclopedia of Literary Places*. 3 vols. Pasadena, CA: Salem P, 2003. I: 42–43, 155–56, 408, 439–40; II: 591–92; III: 1070–71, 1163–64. Contains entries on *An American Tragedy*, *The Bulwark*, *The Financier*, *The "Genius," Jennie Gerhardt*, *Sister Carrie*, and *The Titan*.

2003.48. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1). *Kirkus Reviews* 71.2 (2003): 113.

2003.49. Rogers, Michael. Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1). *Library Journal* 128.4 (1 March 2003): 124.

2003.50. Rompalske, Dorothy. "The Deadly Affair of Grace Brown and Chester Gillette." *Biography* Oct. 2003: 20–21.

2003.51. Ryan, James Emmett. "Imaginary Friends: Representing Quakers in Early American Fiction." *Studies in American Fiction* 31.2 (2003): 191–220. Discusses Dreiser's *The Bulwark*, which "stands near the conclusion of a long tradition of using Quakers as exemplary figures in American fiction."

2003.52. See, Mandy. " 'It Was Written That We Meet': The Collaborative Friendship of Theodore Dreiser and George Douglas." *Dreiser Studies* 34.1 (2003): 35–57.

2003.53. "Short Story E No. 193." *Moscow News* 5 Feb. 2003: 9. Reprints Robert Benchley's spoof (1927.4) of *An American Tragedy* in both the original English and Russian translation, followed by comments (in English) on Dreiser's style based on an excerpt from the opening chapter of *An American Tragedy*: "if Dreiser's style was massively clumsy and his diction often trite, he understood supremely well the psychology of the

outsider in the rising American cities, his loneliness, his distress, and the cost exacted of him for the realization of his dreams."

2003.54. Smith, Roger W. "A Dreiser Checklist, 1998–1999." *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 57–70.

2003.55. ———. "Overlooked Items in Previous Dreiser Checklists." *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 71–104.

2003.56. ———. "Review Essay: Dreiser on the Web." *Dreiser Studies*, 34.1 (2003): 66–91.

2003.57. Van Vechten, Carl. *The Splendid Drunken Twenties: Selections from the Daybooks, 1922–1930*. Ed. Bruce Kellner. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003. 21–22, 37, 49, 54, 79, 116, 122, 157, 203, 233, 306.

2003.58. Vogt, Melissa. "Theodore Dreiser Honored as Journalist." *Tribune Star* (Terre Haute, IN) 13 April 2003. Notes Dreiser's induction into Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame.

2003.59. Volkova, Olga. "A Socialist Realist Perspective on *Sister Carrie*." *Dreiser Studies* 34.2 (2003): 3–23.

2003.60. Yardley, Jonathan. "A Sprawling Tale of Errant Ambition Makes for a Dubious Entry in the Library of America." Review of Library of America edition of *An American Tragedy* (A2003.1). *Washington Post Book World*. 9 March 2003: T02.

2003.61. Zayani, Mohamed. "From Determinism to Indeterminacy: Chaos Theory, Systems Theory, and the Discourse of Naturalism." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature 40. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003. 344–66. Argues that *The Financier* and *Sister Carrie* resist conventional one-dimensional deterministic readings.

# Reviews

*Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature 40. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003. 416 pp. Cloth, $42.00.

Picture this torturous scene: the bodies of two wrestlers, their naked flesh entangled, the wrestler on top pinning his opponent's arm in an attempt to wrestle his shoulders to the ground; his opponent, as yet undefeated, cocking his head cleverly but painfully to prevent his shoulder from touching the ground, his muscled upper body and legs so tightly taut that we anticipate his springing up—counterattacking—should his combatant release his firm grip for just a fraction of a second. This 1905 oil painting by George Benjamin Luks, *The Wrestlers*, graces the cover of Mary Papke's *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*, perhaps a perfect visual metaphor for two classic preoccupations of naturalist fiction: the forensic study of the material body with its raw, kinetic energy and the Social-Darwinistic dance to the gods of power and dominance. The picture compels as it repels by representing a world that is, as the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye so aptly characterized naturalist fiction, in bondage, placing the viewer/reader in a position of intellectual and moral superiority vis-à-vis the represented subjects.

Chronologically structured, this book of twenty-one essays explores these classical motifs of naturalism in fiction by Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Jack London and others. At the same time, the book's key contribution is to look beyond the classic era—and its conventional tropes—to uncover naturalistic tendencies in works traditionally not associated with naturalism. Thus the book opens with what may come as a surprise: Sara Britton Goodling's argument that we need to look no further than America's own 19th-century sentimental fiction to find the progenitors for American literary naturalism: "In the texts by [Rebecca Harding] Davis


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and [Elizabeth Stuart] Phelps, sentimental hope generally triumphs over naturalistic despair. In later naturalist texts, despair is often the victor. The struggle, however, is the same, and its birthplace is the sentimental novel." Another traditional opposite—the relationship between naturalism and modernism, this one particularly important for Dreiser studies, given that Dreiser produced some of his fiction during the heyday of modernism—is explored in, among others, Tim Edwards's chapter, "Oppressive Bodies: Victorianism, Feminism, and Naturalism in Evelyn Scott's *The Narrow House*." A Tennessee author, Evelyn Scott was familiar with the era's most avant-garde writings, as her occasional contributions to *The Little Review* document; in her 1921 novel, she presents the pregnant and birthing body as a "naturalistic animal," as the infant arrives "to wrestle with" the mother: "something leaped angrily upon her and dragged her to earth. Hot claws sank into her." In such scenes we are also tempted to ask to what extent naturalism's predilection for the grotesque was inspired by, or helped pave the way for, the grotesque in surrealist or Dada expressions. Papke's book ends with essays by Philip Gerber and Donald Pizer, each focusing on the naturalist trajectory that connects writers like Theodore Dreiser to postmodern writers such as Paul Auster, Raymond Carver, and Don DeLillo, an important trajectory already familiar to readers of *Dreiser Studies*.

In what has the potential to become an exciting new field of exploration, *Twisted from the Ordinary* also makes important forays into exploring racial issues in American naturalism. Theodore Dreiser is taken to task for ethnic blindness in Laura Hapke's chapter, "No Green Card Needed: Dreiserian Naturalism and Proletarian Female Whiteness." Although Dreiser had witnessed racial violence when he covered a lynching in 1893 near Valley Park, an event that inspired his "Nigger Jeff," Dreiser chose not to represent the New York story of non-white working-class people in *Sister Carrie* but instead represented in Carrie Meeber, "the goddess" of "blue-collar whiteness," a woman who "would never have been among the casualties of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, one of the city's worst industrial tragedies." In an essay on Paul Laurence Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods* (1902), Nancy von Rosk explores how white culture acts as a deterministic force in defining "what it means to be an African American," while Kecia Driver McBride explores the naturalist techniques and themes in Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946). This study of African-American contributions to naturalism has particular promise and relevance. In recently discussing *Home to Harlem* (1928) by Jamaican-American writer Claude McKay, students in my American Modernism course highlighted the naturalist core at the heart of this Harlem Renaissance novel, yet the novel, like the entire field of Afri-

can-American naturalism, has remained virtually unexplored by naturalist scholars (perhaps with the notable exception of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, which earlier scholarship has compared to Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*). As Nancy von Rosk writes, "race is not an obvious concern for most naturalist writers, nor has race been a compelling element in much of the critical discussion of their work." *Twisted from the Ordinary* has begun to fill this cavernous gap in the scholarship of literary Naturalism and invites further research.

There are many other intriguing contributions. Robert M. Dowling's "Stephen Crane and the Transformation of the Bowery" explores the Bowery, with its theatres, burlesque shows and dance halls, "as the epicenter of working class culture," but also documents the suppression of this rich subculture in Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). In "The 'Bitter Taste' of Naturalism: Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* and David Graham Phillips's *Susan Lenox*," Donna M. Campbell dives into archival resources to anchor *Susan Lenox* as "a dark mirror version of *The House of Mirth.*" Barbara Hochman's "Highbrow/Lowbrow: Naturalist Writers and the 'Reading Habit' " compellingly illuminates the practice of using intertextual allusions during the naturalist era, while Hildegard Hoeller and Mohamed Zayani, respectively, explore the gift economy in Norris's *McTeague* and the relevance of chaos theory to naturalism.

All told, Mary Papke's *Twisted from the Ordinary* makes a valuable and vigorous addition to the book shelves of Dreiser aficionados. On occasion the reader might wish for an even more tightly organized book or for a more theoretically rigorous overview in the introduction. For instance, can we still hail a Foucaultian reading as a "new" approach in 2004? In 1994, during the heyday of Foucaultian, Lacanian and Derridean readings, I published my first book, *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove*, a Foucaultian gender reading of naturalism; ten years later, Foucaultian readings continue to make important contributions, as Daniel Schierenbeck's fine discussion of the clinical gaze in *McTeague* shows; but the prefacing of this, and any other, approach requires a more finely calibrated delineation of theoretical foundation, development, and departure.

Why another study of naturalism now? Mary Papke's answer: it is the power of naturalist texts to be transgressive, to repulse, shock, and unsettle with style and subject matter that makes them relevant today. Indeed, I would add that our mainstream television culture—talk shows, reality shows, and forensic crime shows, all driven by a frenzy for the "real"—share with naturalism an unrelenting drive for discovering a visible truth; in

both there is an almost messianic belief in the forensic truth value. Thus scholarship in literary naturalism might open its boundaries to these broader cultural arenas; useful too might be a consideration of naturalism within Heterology, which examines those "things and practices which are subject to prohibition and censorship" (Julian Pefanis, *Heterology and the Post-modern: Bataille, Baudrillard, and Lyotard* [North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991] 48). Finally, Laura Hapke unapologetically asks us to locate the heartbeat of American naturalism in what has been its traditional strength: its social protest function. The reminder is apt. In an era when runway glamour is off-set by unsettling images of Tommy Hilfinger and Nike garment sweatshops in developing countries, naturalism's social function as a critical watchdog is as relevant as it was a hundred years ago. Interestingly, today Dreiser's young Cowperwood would find inspiration not in a fish tank, by observing that eternally unequal battle of lobster and squid, nor by observing the choreographed fight of two wrestlers; he would be watching the televised social-Darwinistic struggle in the board room of Donald Trump's *The Apprentice*, with the compelling, and repelling, ritual of raw, naked power: "You're fired!"

—Irene Gammel, Ryerson University, Toronto

*Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism*, by Jennifer L. Fleissner. Women in Culture and Society Series. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. xiv + 338 pp. Cloth, $65.00. Paper, $25.00.

*Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism* advances many arguments: literary naturalism is a larger category than realism, rather than a subset of it; literary treatments of naturalism have been limited to polarized views of fatalism or nostalgia; naturalism's determinism should be re-configured as compulsion; the United States of the 1890s should be more deeply historicized, particularly in terms of women's experiences; and, finally, naturalism locates modernity's "open ended possibility" in the female bildungsroman rather than in nostalgic masculinity. Like all good works of women's studies scholarship, this book performs the feminist two-step: 1) include women in the category; and 2) expand the category's conceptual boundaries to account for the new perspectives brought by a focus on women and women's lives. By "show[ing] the deep imbrication of this particular period's fiction with a broad range of contemporaneous shifts in women's lives," *Women, Compulsion, Modernity* also

"questions the procedures of historicization itself," particularly a historicization of U.S. modernity as masculine rebellion against feminizing constraints. As the 1890s offered women new freedoms in work and family, female and male writers detailed these changes within the narrative of "a naturalist heroine getting stuck along the way to completing her personal story." In Fleissner's words, "A new literary history of the 1890s might go something like this: Rather than a story of men running off from the worlds of New England fiction to rediscover the conflict and uncanniness of raw nature, we find those same qualities erupting from within the domestic mode itself, as the classic story of feminine growing up becomes a perverse tale of compulsive behaviors."

As part of an ongoing project by feminist scholars to expand what counts as knowledge through the inclusion of women's experiences, the book's reading of women into naturalism is less astounding than the breadth and depth through which it achieves that goal. Fleissner's investigations cover not only the U.S. authors most often associated with naturalism—Norris, Dreiser, Crane—but other more loosely associated authors as well, writers whose works offer provocative extensions of naturalism's contours—Gilman, Wharton, Freeman, James, Chopin, Stein, Grimke, Wright, Larsen, Hurston, and Petry. In six chapters and a conclusion that introduces important ideas needing further investigation regarding African-American women authors, *Women, Compulsion, Modernity* analyzes both writers and literary critics to offer new material and perspectives for readers interested in incorporating diversity into the era's literary coverage.

Chapter One opens with a question both interesting and irritating: "What happens when we rethink naturalism as a literature about compulsion—a literature that does not simply engage its historical moment but, in so doing, keeps getting stuck in place?" This question outlines the main concept of Fleissner's study, a concept that lacks psychological grounding in the book itself: "stuckness." This quasi-colloquial coinage rings flat in a book otherwise written in (often ponderous) academic prose. Why "stuckness" instead of "immobility," "inertia," "entrapment," or "arrested development"? Avoiding direct definition of the term, Fleissner attempts to show it for what it is not: rather than a lack of action or an inability to move, "stuckness" is instead "an ongoing, nonlinear, repetitive motion—back and forth, around and around, on and on—that has the distinctive effect of seeming also like a stuckness in place." This state describes for the author naturalism's "most characteristic plot," especially regarding female protagonists. Additionally, the "repetitive motion" of "stuckness" identifies the concept of "compulsion" and "obsessive-compulsive disorder" that Fleiss-

ner argues replaces determinism as naturalism's dominant criteria. All naturalist protagonists, in Fleissner's assessment, participate in some form of compulsion. From the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" creeping around her window-barred room to Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening* rhythmically swimming to her death, compulsive behavior marks women characters' attempts to move beyond the repetitive motions of domestic responsibilities and reproductive obligations.

Chapter 4 offers a re-reading of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* that focuses on the title character as "a successful actress as much as a consumer." Bringing Carrie's profession to the fore is intended to illuminate the novel's cognizance of the critical shift in the shape of women's lives during the era. This chapter responds to critiques of sentimentalism in Dreiser's novel (as well as in Frank Norris's *McTeague*) to reconcile what critics have viewed as Dreiser's conflicting combination of sentimental and realist techniques. For Fleissner and others, this conflict is tied to questions of gender: male characters exhibit realist tendencies, female characters sentimental ones. Fleissner's reading turns this equation on its head by projecting Carrie as the realist character. Although previous critics have focused on Carrie's consumerist desires as a mark of her sentimental femininity, Fleissner examines writings on women's roles at the turn of the century to center Carrie's story in women's labor struggles amidst rural flight. That Carrie, like many young women of her time, comes to support herself economically classifies her as a quite *unsentimental* figure, despite her materialistic goals. In Fleissner's view, Carrie's choice of an acting career is a plausible one, given that the number of employed actresses in the US rose from 780 to 15,436 between 1870 and 1910. Carrie's—and Dreiser's—ambivalence toward or even rejection of the marriage plot for women echoes the period's obsession with such new possibilities for women. Pairing Dreiser's novel with Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* as illustrative of an "ambivalent female plot," Fleissner's chapter deftly juxtaposes historical and literary sources in a new reading of Carrie as this "New Woman."

*Women, Compulsion, Modernity* explores a wide range of literary texts to expand the category of naturalism. Beyond offering useful readings for those interested in this literary and historical period, Fleissner's study will hopefully inspire more classroom coverage of texts by writers previously on the margins of this era. Reading canonical and non-canonical texts together will not only enlarge the number of writers who count as naturalist, but will also expand our understanding of naturalism.

—Kayann Short, University of Colorado, Boulder

*American Naturalism,* ed. Harold Bloom. Bloom's Period Studies. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2004. 320 pp. Cloth, $37.95.

With this eleventh compendium in his Period Studies series, Harold Bloom offers an indispensable guide to the trajectory of thought about American literary naturalism and its practitioners. The fifteen selections will be familiar to most students of the genre, but having them together in one volume offers the chance to note how contentious the discussion of naturalism has been, how frequently naturalism has been pronounced dead only to rise again, and how changeable has been Theodore Dreiser's critical status as naturalist and literary artist.

Bloom's short introduction offers a critique of certain naturalist texts—by Crane, Chopin, Wharton, and Dreiser—rather than an historical survey of the genre. In Dreiser's case Bloom focuses on *An American Tragedy* and quarrels with its title. He finds Clyde lacking in both ethos (he "has no character") and logos (he "has no mind to speak of"), the two ingredients necessary for tragic status. Bloom suggests (too late) that a better label for the book would have been *An American Suffering* or *An American Passion.* But unlike many others who have complained that Dreiser's title overrates his protagonist, Bloom does not disparage the overall achievement of the novel. Rather, he reaffirms its rank as "the masterpiece of American Naturalism." Bloom credits Dreiser with "enormous power" and the "uncanny quality of being able to tap into our common nightmares." For Bloom, Dreiser is a "unique instance in high literature of an author who lived by forces he could not understand, forces that strongly did the writing for him."

The earliest entries in the volume come from Frank Norris, Lionel Trilling, Phillip Rahv, and Malcolm Cowley. Norris's classic and often quoted "Zola as a Romantic Writer" presents Zola's characters as far closer to the heroes of romance than to Howells's "ordinary" sort, displaying "unleashed passions" and performing in "a vast and terrible drama" involving "blood and sudden death." They are proof, Norris argues, that naturalism is not the "inner circle of realism" but rather a species of romanticism. Trilling's 1950 essay "Reality in America" opens with an attack on "liberal" criticism. It soon becomes clear, however, that his real target is Dreiser. He accuses him of "dullness and stupidity" and his defenders of political partisanship. In forging a case against Dreiser, Trilling quotes several of the novelist's clunkier sentences as evidence that he couldn't write. (He overlooks, though, my personal favorite, from *The "Genius,"* in which Eugene and one of his lovers "rowed lakeward.") Rahv's ''Notes on the Decline of Naturalism" (1949) focuses first on what was then a fresh group of writers trying to

"create a new type of imaginative prose into which the recognizably real enters as one component rather than as the total substance." Rahv rightly contends that pure naturalism has never existed because "life always triumphs over methods" but argues that Dreiser comes closest to naturalistic purity. He does not mean this as a compliment. He finds Dreiser the most "unreadable" of writers in part because he is so consistently naturalistic. He concludes by announcing that naturalism has had its day. But half a century after Rahv's funeral oration we can see that the beast is still very much alive if we but consent to a description of it only slightly less restrictive than the one he employs. In ''Naturalism in American Literature" (1950), Cowley sets out to describe systematically the origins of our home-grown naturalism; to fix its nomenclature and to demonstrate as well what it is not about; to list the works he considers naturalistic; and finally to evaluate the movement. He argues that, unlike the Europeans who were directly inspired by Darwin, Spencer, and other philosophers, American naturalists were first intent on overthrowing the stifling strictures of Puritanism and the genteel tradition. They did so by adopting the new doctrine as defined in European novels like Zola's because they had few American authors to use as "rebellious" models. After putting forward what by Cowley's day was a standard list of naturalism's tenets, he contends that it is not a method or a philosophy suited to last over a lifetime because at its best it is always dissolving, as in those passages where the naturalist becomes most personal and lyrical. Much as Norris sees Zola, Cowley sees Dreiser as "romantic by taste and temperament." Like Trilling, he judges Dreiser to be ''the worst writer" among his peers but one whose misuse of language we paradoxically "come to cherish . . . as a sign of authenticity, like the tool marks on Shaker furniture."

Among the more recent entries are two by Donald Pizer, the current dean of American naturalism scholars. The first of these, "Late Nineteenth-Century Naturalism," identifies two tensions in the genre. The first involves naturalism's subject matter and "the concept of man" that emerges from it. By this Pizer means that the lower class characters of the novel nevertheless participate in "acts usually associated with the heroic or adventurous," a point similar to one made by Norris. The second tension resides in the theme of the naturalist novel: though its characters "are conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, instinct, or chance," the novelist "suggests a compensating humanistic value in his characters or their fates which affirms the significance of the individual and of his life." The second Pizer essay, "Contemporary American Literary Naturalism," proceeds from an assumption opposite Rahv's. Pizer believes naturalism has survived in

America because of its "dynamic adaptability." Among the more recent naturalists he counts Norman Mailer, Joyce Carol Oates, and Robert Stone. Reviewing some of their work, Pizer contends that naturalism thrives on stressful times in the U.S. and that its resurgence in the seventies owed much to the Vietnam War and Watergate.

In "Panoramic Environment and the Anonymity of the Self" (1966), primarily devoted to analysis of James, Wharton, and Dreiser, Richard Poirier claims that Dreiser, like Wharton, will remain compelling for his influence on later writers like Fitzgerald who "tacitly admit their bedazzlement with the very horrors of the modem scene which obliterate their even more bedazzled heroes." He sees Dreiser as "intimidated by the things he describes, even by the banalities of conversation he reports." Symptomatic of Dreiser's sense of his own insignificance in the cosmic scheme are the "fluctuations and unsteadiness" in his narrative voice. But Poirier admires rather than denigrates this aspect of Dreiser's art. He concludes his discussion by linking Dreiser's "voice of the inanimate," first heard in *Sister Carrie*, to such "comic-apocalyptic" writers of the sixties as Thomas Pynchon.

For Harold Kaplan, *Sister Carrie* illustrates literary naturalism's "series of paradoxes." The "strong effect" of Dreiser's novels has to do with his "dynamic sense of the curve of fortune." Kaplan's "Naturalist Fiction and Political Allegory" (1981) sees such a world view as indirectly political because it leads to a revulsion from "survival of the fittest" as an inevitable path toward capitalism. Kaplan points to the intertwining of Hurstwood's decline with the street railway strike to show how Dreiser uses such combinations to move the novel from the personal to the implicitly political. Similar strategies in the works of Norris and Dos Passos show that the "naturalist view retains its moral bias even as it presents an impersonal estimate of the enemy's power."

Richard Lehan's "American Literary Naturalism: The French Connection" (1984) defines literary naturalism as part of and inseparable from the rise of modernism: the product of historical processes including the movement from a landed to an urban economy, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the growth of empirical/scientific assumptions about reality, new technology, and the increasing power of money, all of which led to the impulse of nationalism and the rise of empire. Lehan provides particularly helpful summaries of various Zola novels in the context of political and economic changes in France, then segues into a discussion of American naturalism by way of a list of minor writers whose combined works cover the period of economic change that led to the Gilded Age. But it was the naturalists, Lehan asserts, who laid the groundwork for the "radical novel" of modernity.

His concluding discussion of Norris's influence on Dreiser singles out *The Pit* as an inspiration for the Cowperwood trilogy. Like the majority of critics selected by Bloom, Lehan prematurely pronounces the form finished, but he does grant an historical status to naturalism as "an important movement in the development of the novel."

The selection from Michael Fabre's book *The World of Richard Wright* (1985) characterizes Wright as a "humanist who retains the Marxist perspective as an ideological tool" and who "believes in ethical responsibility, and a certain degree of free will in a world whose values are not created by a transcendental entity, but by the common workings of mankind." Fabre makes several connections between Wright and Dreiser, noting, for example, similarities in their backgrounds and the fact that Wright regarded Dreiser as "a literary giant nearly on a par with Dostoevsky." Fabre asserts that naturalism "both as a philosophy and as a literary technique" exemplified by Dreiser and Farrell provided Wright with "a starting point" toward a final position of greater complexity.

The excerpt from Phillip Fisher's 1985 book *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* never strays from *An American Tragedy.* He persuasively presents the novel as an admixture of separate, "fragile, transient worlds"—the world of the street corner where the Griffiths family evangelizes, the world of the Green-Davidson hotel, the world of the Lycurgus upper class, the world of the penitentiary, and others. Clyde clings to a kind of group identity in these worlds, sometimes signified by a uniform (bellhop, prisoner) or, in the case of the Lycurgus world, by his uncanny resemblance to his cousin Gilbert. Within each world there are "defective positions" for those who are "out of place" but present by "exemption." In Lycurgus, Clyde occupies such a position, participating in "the aura without membership in the world." Dreiser's style is presented as a strength here. For Fisher, Dreiser's third person stream of consciousness repeatedly highlights words like "although," "if," "if only," and "yet" to indicate how the Lycurgus world especially "becomes conditional, concessive, possible, yet in becoming possible, impossible." This essay is the most provocative and lively in this collection. Since it has little to do with naturalism per se, one suspects that Bloom included it for that reason and because *An American Tragedy* represents such an important example of the genre.

Donna M. Campbell's "Dreiser, London, Crane, and the Iron Madonna" (1997) closes out the selections that treat Dreiser's work. It examines certain naturalists' use of women characters as "objects of study in themselves rather than as the representatives of human nature they had frequently been in local color fiction." These writers, and here Campbell in-

cludes Dreiser, "sympathized with the powerlessness of women" while at the same time preserving the notion of woman's "otherness." Naturalists were drawn to prostitutes, writes Campbell, for several reasons. These women fit the deterministic construct inasmuch as they represented a compelling case of "the struggle to survive in an indifferent universe." Writers like Crane and London felt a kinship with prostitutes because they also sold a part of themselves to make a meager living. Similarly, in *Sister Carrie,* Dreiser was sympathetic to the shop girl's "trying on clothes for Drouet" and later "appearing on stage in *Under the Gaslight.*" Carrie doesn't sell her body as a prostitute but she "operates on the same basic principle of presenting herself as a surface upon which Hurstwood and Drouet can inscribe their fantasies."

Selections by Ann Douglass, Barbara Hochman, and Michael Davitt Bell round out the discussion of literary naturalism through cogent treatments of works by Farrell, Wharton and Chopin, and Norris, respectively, but critical discussion of Dreiser's work dominates this volume. *American Naturalism* includes a useful bibliography and index as well as thumbnail sketches of the critics represented. Bloom also includes a helpful year-by-year chronology tying the publication of naturalist works to other literary and historical events. The chronology begins with 1880 and ends with 1990. Why the past fifteen years are not included is something of a mystery. Another, more puzzling omission leaves out any word from Charles Child Walcutt, whose 1956 study *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream* was for many years the most influential and trusted work in the field.

To conclude, despite their numerous premature announcements of its death, these reprinted critical classics demonstrate naturalism's ongoing importance both as a philosophy and as a literary genre. Naturalism lives and retains its enduring interest because it fronts with life's fundamental questions. And the weight given his work in this compilation reveals Dreiser's continuing relevance and centrality to any discussion of naturalism. It is clear that greater critical appreciation of his achievements has emerged over time, through many successive reassessments.

—Lawrence E. Hussman, Wright State University

*Adirondack Tragedy: The Gillette Murder Case of 1906*, 3rd ed., by Joseph W. Brownell and Patricia W. Enos. Utica, NY: Nicholas K. Burns Publishing, 2003. 206 pp. Paper, $16.95.

When writing *An American Tragedy*, Theodore Dreiser relied primarily on newspaper clippings from the *New York World* for details of Grace Brown's murder and the subsequent trial of Chester Gillette, the case that served as the basis for Clyde Griffith's murder of Roberta Alden in the novel. For the past 18 years, Dreiser scholars have been fortunate to have two book-length accounts of the case. Both Craig Brandon's *Murder in the Adirondacks: An American Tragedy Revisited* (Utica, NY: North Country Books; reviewed in *Dreiser Studies* 18.1) and Joseph W. Brownell and Patricia W. Enos's *Adirondack Tragedy: The Gillette Murder Case of 1906* were originally published in 1986. The publication in 2003 of a third edition of the Brownell and Enos book provides the occasion to look again at these resources and at the role of the Gillette case in the making of *An American Tragedy*.

Neither of these volumes is a work of literary scholarship. Rather, they are local histories telling the "true" story of the murder. All three authors have local connections: Brownell is a retired geographer who grew up in the Adirondacks, lived in Cortland, and worked at SUNY Cortland; his co-author Enos is on the faculty of the medical radiography program at SUNY Syracuse; Brandon is a journalist who lived for several years in Utica. In these two books, the authors set out to strip the Gillette case of myths created by folklore, Hollywood films, and one very famous novel.

Although written for a popular audience, both books do provide scholars with convenient access to facts of the case that would otherwise require reading through trial transcripts, newspaper reports, personal papers, and eyewitness accounts. The two books tell basically the same story with a slight difference in emphasis. Brandon's book, which is almost twice as long and provides more extensive notes, favors newspapers from Utica and Herkimer (where the trial took place), while Brownell and Enos's relies more heavily on the *Cortland Standard* (Chester and Grace met and lived in Cortland) and on personal papers and interviews.

The two books follow almost identical structures. Both start *in medias res*—Brownell and Enos with the story of Chester's July 4th outing with another woman a week before the murder, Brandon with the discovery of Grace Brown's body. They then go back to introduce the reader to Chester and Grace and tell the story of their relationship, their journey to the Adirondacks, the investigation, trial, and verdict. Both end by discussing the

many fictional accounts of the crime, including Dreiser's.

They begin by describing the history and travels of the Gillette family from New York to the West. Whereas Brandon gives greater detail about the family's involvement with the Salvation Army and the Dowieites, Brownell and Enos offer a more in-depth view of Chester's uncle, N. H. Gillette, the inspiration for Samuel Griffiths. Calling him "Cortland's Horatio Alger," they present him as the model for what Chester could have become—a young man who came back east and with the help of an uncle climbed to success. N. H. Gillette was a self-made man who owned a skirt factory. He was known for innovative business practices, such as giving responsibility and opportunity to his female employees. Chester, whose interest in women was of a different sort, never lived up to N. H. Gillette's example.

Grace Brown was, according to both accounts, an intelligent young woman with her own aspirations of success. She moved from the farm in South Ostelic to the city of Cortland to work in the Gillette factory. The parallel chapters on Grace are a good example of the difference between the two books. Brandon refers to local histories and newspaper accounts to flesh out the Brown family history in great detail. Brownell and Enos quote from Grace's own diary, giving a more intimate and personal feel to the text.

The use of different sources leads to some inconsistencies between the two books. For example, Grace originally moved to Cortland to help her sister. When her young nephew died and her sister moved away, she chose to stay in Cortland, in part to be with Chester. The books give different versions of the nephew's death. According to Brandon, who gets his information from the local newspaper, the child was staying with Grace's parents, fell ill, and died before the Browns realized they should call a doctor. Brownell and Enos offer a more vivid tale. According to a family story, the child was "running through the farmhouse with a curtain rod in his mouth," fell, lacerated his throat, and died when the wound became infected. Whether this story is true or family legend, it's an example of the kind of personal detail found in Brownell and Enos's book.

Perhaps the biggest contribution Brownell and Enos make in this edition of *Adirondack Tragedy* is the correct text of Grace Brown's last letter. Grace's letters to Chester were read aloud at the trial and parts of them were quoted almost verbatim in *An American Tragedy*. Previously, published versions of the letters were based on the court transcripts. As the authors explain in the postscript, the original letters were recently donated to Hamilton College, allowing them to transcribe the letter from the original. The book

also includes photographic reproductions of the original manuscript letter and envelope. The differences are mainly in spelling and punctuation. Unfortunately, the book does not include complete texts of all the letters.

Dreiser's use of Grace Brown's letters is just one point of comparison between *An American Tragedy* and the Gillette case. In chapter 17, "Dreiser—Fact and Fiction," Brownell and Enos offer Dreiser scholars a brief comparison of the novel and the historical facts. The authors conclude that "On first inspection, Dreiser made no changes in so far as the facts of the case are concerned. . . . He adhered so closely to the truth that in the final scenes, he merely paraphrased parts of the actual courtroom testimony." The charge that he had simply copied the Gillette case dogged Dreiser for years and led him to publish "I Find the Real American Tragedy" in 1935 (rpt. in *Resources for American Literary Study* 2 [1972]) to explain that he was not simply recounting a single case but exposing a pattern of crime caused by "dreadful economic, social, moral, and conventional pressures."

However, this pattern of motivation is not found in the Gillette case (nor, for that matter, in the other cases he cites). While Dreiser does incorporate many details of the Gillette case, he also makes two significant changes. The first is in the character of Clyde Griffiths, who is nothing like the self-assured young man from Cortland who hung pictures of pretty women on the walls of his cell, chewed gum during the trial, and displayed no remorse for the death of Grace Brown. The first half of the novel describing Clyde's impoverished early life and the dreams of wealth that lead him to murder bears little resemblance to the life of Chester Gillette.

Dreiser's second notable revision of history is in the character of Sondra Finchley, who has no parallel in the Gillette case. Harriet Benedict, the daughter of a local lawyer, had socialized with Chester, but there was no serious relationship, and Chester was seen with other women, including a dressmaker. Chester did not murder Grace to be with a rich girlfriend. The economic and social motivation for the crime that is so central to the novel is Dreiser's own creation.

For those interested in true crime stories, Brownell and Enos (as well as Brandon) provide an interesting and detailed account of a famous murder. Almost a century later, the Gillette case still captures the public's imagination with its combination of illicit sex, a sympathetic young victim, and a charming culprit who is not what he seems. It's not surprising that the case is featured in a collection like Court TV's Crime Library <www.crimelibrary.com/notorious_murders/classics/chester_gillette/>, which relies heavily on these two books for facts of the case. The legend of Grace Brown also lives on in a recent children's book [*A Northern Light*, by Jenni-

fer Donnelly, reviewed in this issue], in which Grace's famous letters are given to the young female protagonist of the story.

For Dreiser scholars, *Murder in the Adirondacks* and *Adirondack Tragedy* provide a wealth of information to help understand the seeds of *An American Tragedy*. They also demonstrate the complex relationship between fact and fiction. Toward the end of their book, Brownell and Enos tell the story of Roy Higby. As a young boy, Higby was in the boat dragging the bottom of Big Moose Lake and was the first to spot Grace Brown's body underwater. This eyewitness was as close to the case as anyone, yet in his published version of the case "his memory was heavily influenced by *An American Tragedy*." For example, he wrote about Chester's background in Kansas City and his "rich girlfriend," details from the novel but not facts of the case. The authors note that the "Gillette background he related is what most people today think that they remember—and they do, but what they remember is the novel and the movies, not fact." Ironically, while Dreiser claimed that the Gillette case demonstrated a pattern of motivation that he had in fact imposed on it, his fictionalization has in turn influenced public memory and become an inextricable part of the history of the case.

—Kathryn M. Plank, The Ohio State University

**Editor's note**: As we approach the hundredth anniversary of the Gillette murder case, the inspiration for *An American Tragedy*, the reappearance of Grace Brown, her murder, and her letters in a novel aimed at young adults seemed to demand review in *Dreiser Studies*. But how? While not literary or historical scholarship, the book nevertheless couldn't help but be seen as commenting on or illuminating Dreiser's use of their shared materials; by the same token, as a specific type of fiction aimed at younger readers—a female coming-of-age story—it deserved be read according to the conventions of its genre. Here, then, are two reviews, taking very different looks at the same novel.

## *A Northern Light*, by Jennifer Donnelly. New York: Harcourt, 2003. 380 pp. Cloth, $17.00. Paper, $8.95.

Donnelly's *A Northern Light* and Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* both take inspiration from Chester Gillette's 1906 murder of Grace Brown. While Dreiser relied most heavily on the records from the murder trial and sought to tell the story of Chester Gillette's rise and fall, Donnelly looks to the letters of Grace Brown as the motivation for her powerful coming-of-

age story about a young rural girl who wants to go to Barnard and become a writer. Donnelly's heroine, Mattie Gokey, works at the Glenmore Hotel, where Grace and Chester stayed the night before the boat trip that landed Grace at the bottom of the lake. The book opens with the hotel workers reacting to the accident as Grace Brown's body is brought in and men are dragging the lake in search of Chester's. For Mattie, this experience is life changing, although the reasons are not yet clear; indeed, as an aspiring wordsmith, Mattie cannot fully describe the feeling: "Right now I want a word that describes the feeling you get—a cold, sick feeling deep down inside—when you know something is happening that will change you, and you don't want it to, but you can't stop it." Mattie's premonition as Grace's dead body disrupts the easy pleasures of the Glenmore governs the novel's sense of mystery. The subsequent unfolding of several related mysteries moves Mattie from a girl "good at telling [herself] lies" to a young woman brave enough to claim her own dream.

The novel provides an interesting amplification of and counter to Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. Perhaps the most compelling work of this novel is its reading of Grace Brown's letters. The novel includes much direct citation of these letters, as Grace supposedly gave Mattie the letters to burn shortly before going to the lake with Chester, for Mattie reads them, and her reading is represented in the text. In Dreiser's representation of Roberta Alden's letters, based on Grace Brown's, he offered only a few extracts from the letters. Not only does the reader of *A Northern Light* read much larger portions of Grace Brown's letters, but he or she reads the protagonist of the novel reading them. Mattie Gokey reads Grace's letters with great interest and care. She reads them both for meaning—to understand the mystery that surrounds Grace's death—and with compassion because she can understand Grace's feelings of closeness to her family and her uncertain social position as a young woman with no authority. Reading Grace Brown's letters leads Mattie Gokey to figure out the mystery of her death; she learns in the letters that Grace is pregnant, that Chester is really not interested in helping her, and that Grace tells Chester that she cannot swim. In Mattie's interpretative eyes, this all spells murder.

In addition, she reads Grace's premonition of her own death. In her last letter to Chester, Grace discusses leaving her home, speculates that she might "come back dead," and says goodbye to all the things and people she loves. "Oh dear, you don't realize what all of this is to me. I know I shall never see any of them again." These lines show Mattie that Grace knew "deep down inside" that she might never come back, that Chester might kill her instead of marry her. When the passage reappears as Mattie recalls this

letter at the beginning of her own journey, it evokes the fullest reading of the murder we find in the novel: "He waits until he's sure there's no one else around, and then he hits Grace. He tips the boat and swims to shore. Grace can't swim. He knows that because she told him. She'd drown even if she wasn't unconscious, but it's quieter this way. She can't scream for help." In Mattie's hands, the letters prove that the murder was premeditated.

Such a reading is somewhat counter to the one that Dreiser offers in *An American Tragedy*, though one can certainly find it there as well. Many critics have argued that Clyde Griffith is ambivalent about Roberta's murder and that he is led to it through a variety of unavoidable circumstances. The murder scene itself is usually read as ambiguous, with Clyde's nervousness and Roberta's rising in the boat to help him seen as the cause of the accident, not Clyde's premeditated striking of her. In addition to the letters, Mattie's understanding of the murder in *A Northern Light* grows out of additional information about the Gillette case presented in that novel that Dreiser did not include in his. For instance, Chester was seen enjoying himself at a hotel in a nearby town just three days after her death. Of course, Dreiser's Clyde is not Chester and his novel was not a historical one *per se*. And, in a way, neither is Donnelly's. However, the way gender binaries appear inescapable in these two literary renditions of the same event underscores a compelling problem central to Dreiser's work: gender difference itself.

In *An American Tragedy*, Roberta's voice is muted, and Dreiser depicts Clyde's dilemma of upward mobility as a universal desire. Women are desperate to marry and men just want to get ahead. Dreiser spins this a bit by showing that men might want to get ahead by marrying up the social ladder the way women often do. In *A Northern Light*, a reliance on and a subtle play with gender stereotypes is no less apparent, but the emphasis has shifted. Chester is clearly a villain and many of the men in the main story are evil or lecherous or at the very least simply selfish. There are a few strong women such as Miss Wilcox, Cook, and the narrator Mattie and more awful men such as Mr. Loomis; Pa, a crusty disappointed father who hits his kids sometimes though he doesn't mean to; Chester Gillette; and Miss Wilcox's estranged husband Baxter. Royal Loomis, Mattie's boyfriend, parallels Chester and Clyde in that he only wants to advance his own interests and does not really care about Mattie as a person. In fact, the central message of the novel is that women should steer clear of men if they really want to be themselves and achieve their dreams.

Grace Brown offers the core of this cautionary message to Mattie in a scene towards the end of the novel where she appears to Mattie in the night

and asks, "why does *gravid* sound like *grave*?" *Gravid* serves as one of Mattie's words of the day and thus the reader learns the word means *pregnant*. Grace's ghostly declaration appears after the torturous scene in which Mattie visits her best friend Minnie to tell her about her acceptance to Barnard and instead must assist in Minnie's gruesome birthing of twins. After the six-hour trauma during which she thought her friend was going to die, Mattie concludes, "I am never going to marry," and goes on to observe that no one she knows has both books and family. In the classic ending of the woman-writer-coming-of-age story, Mattie boards a train for New York City, leaving her father, her fiancé, and her younger sisters behind.

Mattie Gokey has also left Grace Brown's letters with the authorities, and she is confident that this act will bring Grace's tragic truth to light. The connection between Grace and Mattie as writers and visionaries has been so finely spun that the reader knows that just as Mattie leaves Grace's letters behind, she also takes them with her. Grace's writing will go on through Mattie's efforts; Grace Brown not only haunts but also inspires. In fact, these amount to the same thing. Just before Mattie must make her crucial choice whether to board the train, she recalls the lines of Grace's last letter; she hears her voice. Miss Wilcox, Mattie's teacher, has told her about the importance of voice: "It's what makes Austen sound like Austen and no one else. . . . It's what makes Mattie Gokey sound like Mattie Gokey." During that conversation Mattie reflects on Grace Brown's voice and realizes that she must break her promise to Grace to burn her letters. "If I burn these letters, who will hear Grace Brown's voice? Who will read her story?" Mattie breaks her promise to Grace, presaging the breaking of her deathbed promise to her mother never to leave her sisters. Standing beside Grace's body at the Glenmore, she concludes, "I know it is a bad thing to break a promise, but I think now that it is a worse thing to let a promise break you." And she whispers to Grace, "I'm not going to do it." This realization of the importance of Grace's letters becomes her final acceptance of a declaration she has made throughout the novel about the importance of words. She realizes the power of Grace's text and the potential power of her own. And, in comparing Grace's dead body to her images of Chester enjoying himself in Inlet, Mattie realizes that she owes it not only to herself but to Grace Brown's memory to live the life that she wants and deserves.

Beyond their shared source of inspiration in the Gillette-Brown case, Donnelly's *A Northern Light* evokes Dreiser's commitment to intellectual and artistic courage as well as to the need to tell stories typically not told. Mattie finds her inspiration in texts, and she lives for the next words she'll learn or the next set of books she can borrow from her teacher Miss Wilcox.

Before she runs off to Paris to flee her husband, Miss Wilcox/Emily Baxter gives Mattie three books: a volume of her own poetry, *Threnody*; Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*; and Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*. In the note she encloses with the books, her mentor instructs Mattie "to hide the Dreiser." Yet it will be clear to students of Dreiser who read Donnelly that Carrie and Roberta cannot be kept in the dark for long. By *A Northern Light*'s end, one imagines that Mattie's own light will shine and her voice will be heard. Her train journey will take her to heights less like Carrie's on the stage and more like Dreiser's on the page.

—Linda Dunleavy, Brown University

## *A Northern Light*, by Jennifer Donnelly. New York: Harcourt, 2003. 380 pp. Cloth, $17.00. Paper, $8.95.

As with many characters in young adult novels, Mattie Gokey—the heroine of Jennifer Donnelly's *A Northern Light*—has come to a crossroads. Should she succumb to the call of companionship, marrying a local farmer? Or should she leave behind all that is familiar in order to go to college and become a writer? Mattie knows that if she follows her dream via the ten-fifteen New York Central to the big city, she will be forced to sever ties with her family. But if she remains at home, saddled with her family's hardships and with a life similar to the one her own (now deceased) mother led, she will almost certainly not continue writing. To those of us in the twenty-first century, the choice seems obvious, but Donnelly's skillful depiction of grubby realities makes Mattie's struggle believable.

While *A Northern Light* is by no means the best young adult (YA) offering of recent years, it provides its readers with an engaging story and a new perspective on the haunting story of Grace Brown, the famous inspiration for Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. Set in 1906 in upstate New York, the novel is ambitious, blending elements of romantic fiction, historical fiction, and mystery. It aims, above all, to be "realistic," invoking again and again the notion that it is Mattie's duty as a *writer* to speak for the people in her community and speak about the hardships she has encountered. Yet although Mattie is developing a voice of her own, other voices call. She pines after the neighbor boy Royal, who, to her great surprise, returns her attention. In stock character fashion, he does not hold for "book learning" (the phrase actually appears in the book), and his farm-boy prose often seems deliberately stilted. Yet just as knuckleheaded Royal begins to sound unbelievable, the depiction of him becomes slightly more nuanced, as if Don-

nelly is aware that her character's credibility is in question.

In addition to Royal, other stock characters populate the story, including the Fiery, Independent Teacher Miss Wilcox and the Improbable, almost-Forbidden Friend. The former, a writer in her own right who has secrets to keep, helps Mattie apply to college. She appreciates Mattie's honest, gritty prose, and she urges her to flee before it is too late. Weaver, an African-American boy Mattie has known since childhood, is her chief rival and closest friend. He keeps her mind whetted with word duels—games in which the duelers shoot out synonyms for the vocabulary words they know. Weaver, like Mattie, enjoys intellectual combat, but unlike Mattie he is going to college thanks to a doting, frugal mother who has saved every penny she has earned. Although Miss Wilcox and Weaver, with their "you can do it" attitude, are almost archetypes in adolescent literature, Donnelly keeps their dialogue complex and makes their emotional responses feel—for the most part—genuine.

Unfortunately, the most compelling character in the novel is a figure who remains in the shadows: Grace Brown. Although Grace's story intersects with Mattie's and although it is Grace, more than any other presence in the story, who compels Mattie to radically change her life, she is never a fully fleshed-out character. This is intentional: the reader is supposed to identify with Mattie's struggles, not Grace's. More troubling than this absence is the fact that Grace's story is altered so that Mattie's own story might emerge. Donnelly has taken liberties with the facts of the case, as she herself admits in the Author's Note. In *A Northern Light*, Grace instructs Mattie, who is working at the Glenmore Hotel where the real Grace Brown stayed, to burn a packet of letters. Naturally Mattie doesn't, and bit by bit she reads them. However, these are not Chester Gillette's letters, the only letters the police actually found at the hotel. These belong to Grace and, since it is Grace's voice that leads Mattie to her final decision, Donnelly deems this historical breach acceptable. Whether readers will agree is less certain.

Nevertheless, *A Northern Light* has done well for itself, securing an audience outside the sixteen-year-old-girl market Donnelly intended it for. The cover, particularly of the paperback, reflects this target market and may discourage post-teen readers. Unlike the hardbound cover, which features a girl facing outward, primly poised, the paperback sports a girl, eyes cast seductively downward, with a provocatively plunging neckline. This young lady, presumably Mattie, looks more like a lovelorn character from a WB Television Network show than a heroine of realistic historical fiction. As is all too often the case in books aimed at adolescent girls, a character who

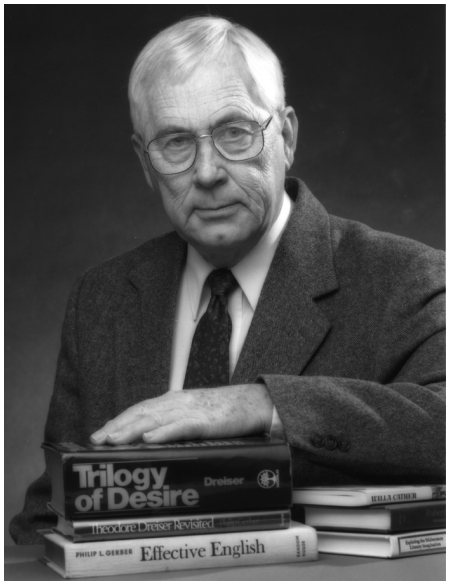
describes herself as plain in the text is depicted as exceptionally pulchritudinous on the cover.

Still, there is more to be found here than the paperback cover suggests. *A Northern Light* was named a 2004 Michael Printz Honor Book, a prize awarded for important contributions to YA literature. Given that it possesses many of the "right" elements, such recognition is not surprising. Not only is Mattie a spirited heroine who must meet her own womanhood head on, she, like the great Jo March (*Little Women*) and Anne Shirley (*Anne of Green Gables*) before her, is a lover of language. In addition to her word duels with Weaver, Mattie reads the dictionary of her own volition. She takes it upon herself to learn a word a day and Donnelly begins many chapters with this word: *misnomer*, *abecedarian*, *abscission*. At times, Donnelly is a little too in love with language, a little too insistent that readers admire Mattie for her devotion to vocabulary and her refusal to be "hornswoggled" by the happily-ever-afters of Austen, Alcott, and Dickens. Fortunately, Donnelly is also careful not to make Mattie too much of a good girl: she admires her boyfriend's buttocks even as she wonders, "What would Jane Eyre do?" In this sense, Mattie Gokey is an important hybrid character, one whose story is worth reading. While *A Northern Light* is a little too aware of itself to be truly engaging, it is nonetheless an inviting book, full, like its narrator, of contradictory charms.

—Meghan Sweeney, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

## News & Notes

**In Memoriam: Philip Gerber**




Philip L. Gerber, Ph.D., died on Wednesday, January, 5, 2005, at the age of 81. He was well-known to Dreiserians as the author of *Theodore Dreiser* (1964) and *Theodore Dreiser Revisited* (1992) as well as many shorter works, especially on the *Trilogy of Desire*. He was a member of the editorial board of *Dreiser Studies* since its inception 35 years ago as the *Dreiser Newsletter*, as well as a founding member of the International Theodore Dreiser Society, serving as its president from 1996 to 1997. He was a long-time member of the Dreiser Edition's editorial board. He also authored books on Robert Frost and Willa Cather and served as president of the Frost Society in 1989 and on the executive committee of the E. E. Cummings Society.

Dr. Gerber's academic career spanned more than 55 years. Even beyond the usual age for retirement for many professors, he was active and admired, especially in his 35 years at the SUNY College at Brockport. He was appointed by the United States Information Service as "Speaker in India" in 1994 and lectured at the Universities of Bombay, Pondicherry, Trivandrum, Annamalainager, Baroda, Guahati, Ahmenabad, and the American Centers at Hyderabad and New Delhi. In 1999 he was promoted to SUNY Distinguished Professor, the highest rank within the SUNY system. Before coming to SUNY Brockport in 1966, he held a number of faculty and administrative positions in universities in Iowa, Texas, Utah, California, and South Dakota.

This writer had the privilege to co-teach with him several years ago, dur-

ing three of his final appearances in a classroom: on Emerson, Hawthorne, and Whitman. My students and I learned much during those days, especially from Phil's countering argument to my offhand remark that Poe was not truly a Romantic, according to some criteria. He would have none of it, pronouncing that "Poe was the most Romantic writer of them all." His rebuttal was as collegial as it was plain-spoken and assertive; and that was Gerber as I knew him. Phil was familiar on campus as a prolific lecturer, an approachable mentor, a correspondent favoring the typewriter and post office over e-mail, and for generosity with his large collection of books. Retiring in 2001 after being diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer, he continued to write, when his health permitted, and was working on an edited volume of civil war letters and a book of poems when he died.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Eugenia (Gene), sons Gaylen Gerber of Chicago and Dr. Glenn Gerber of San Diego, and daughter Vivien Anderson of Oneonta, NY, and five brothers and one sister.

—Shawn St. Jean

My mother-in-law once wisely noted that when you begin to lose people in your life, part of the tragedy is that you are really losing parts of yourself, and, as a result, you begin to feel somehow diminished, a smaller being on this earth. Yet if this is true, then there is an opposite that is surely true as well: our friends and family members can "enlarge" us, make us feel that our skills and talents are vital to the very well being of the world.

I met Dr. Gerber in 1990, in a course he was teaching and I was taking on American literature. With the odds stacked against me of completing even one novel for his class—my children were 1, 4 and 6, and my husband traveled often—I somehow survived Dr. Gerber's course. With Dr. Gerber's encouragement, in fact, I went on to fan into flame the spark of an idea I'd had in his class, completing, over the subsequent three years, the master's degree that would lead to my present career. And although the logistics of my juggling work and family were complex, involving a great deal of help from my family, I always felt I had an empathetic pal in Dr. Gerber, whose ready smile and hearty laugh on hearing the stories of my life clued me in that he wasn't unfamiliar with the territory I was traveling.

One time, in fact, when he had reduced his teaching schedule at the college to do more research, he invited me over to the house to go over a segment of my master's thesis. There, I watched my esteemed professor do his own juggling act. The designated babysitter for his granddaughters that day, he simultaneously commented on my paper and joined in a board game of

"Guess Who?" with—and to the delight of—young Katherine and Michelle.

In classes, there was nothing about Dr. Gerber that was showy or that would ever make it into an article on flashy teaching styles. I signed up for his course simply because a friend of mine was so impressed with his straightforward, sincere manner: he led good discussions and concluded my friend's class by giving each student a book from his own personal collection. What I liked was that Dr. Gerber was a powerhouse of knowledge whose humility made him come across as a regular guy; he could talk about the literary greats as easily as he could talk about the weather.

I fished around for a while to find a topic I liked for the master's thesis—that huge, culminating project that strikes fear into the heart of every graduate student in English. Dr. Gerber helped me stay the course until I had completed all 108 pages two years later. I always appreciated the fact that he hung back and waited until I found something I was truly interested in, when he might have shared hundreds of his own ideas with me.

But when I look back, one of the things I cherish most about Dr. Gerber is the occasional written correspondence we had over 12 or so years. In a time when e-mails can vanish at the touch of the "delete" button, there is nothing like a collection of good, old-fashioned notes sent by regular mail. His notes, all brief, typed on small format stationery, signed in bold black marker—"Best, Phil Gerber"—captured both his gentility and a practical, expedient side that had no need for the Internet. Why bother? He was as good and regular a communicator as the most die-hard e-mailers today.

In graduate school, I received timely responses of encouragement on the drafts of the thesis I was sending to him from my home in Webster to his in Brockport; after I graduated, notes continued to come in, congratulating me on an accomplishment of my son's that he'd seen in the paper, commiserating on the death of my father after seeing the death notice, sharing his scholarly pursuits, and relating his exploits in research and travel with his wife, Gene. Once, after he was named distinguished professor, he wrote a note thanking me for a letter of support I had written and signed it, as usual: "Best, Philip Gerber." He then typed his new title below his name: "Distinguished Professor," adding these words in unabashed delight: "I relish the newness of it."

As a nice bonus for me, just as I was putting the final touches on my thesis, Dr. Gerber—his literary radar always "on"—came across a flier from a small university press, seeking articles in my subject area for an anthology. Three years after I graduated, the book came out, with two of my essays in it. And although there was little glory involved—my payment from the university came in the form of two free copies of the book—I had followed my

passion and made my mentor proud.

My children are no longer youngsters, and I am now a high school English teacher, where I bring my love of the written word—certainly stoked up by what I learned from Dr. Gerber—into the classroom each day.

And when I consider how much we've lost in the passing of this fine gentleman, I can't help but reflect on Dr. Gerber's own words about death, in a note he wrote me around his 75th birthday:

"I have thought of life as a great adventure, and still do . . . more than my share of rewards has come to me . . . and it is great to think that at 75 there still are new boundaries to cross." He added that he liked Willa Cather's idea of death as (his paraphrase) "being dissolved in something great and wonderful."

If I could only have said one more thing to my teacher, it would be this: My best to you, Dr. Philip Gerber, as you cross this final earthly boundary into what will undoubtedly be something great and wonderful.

—Mary Heveron-Smith

**Dreiser at ALA, Boston, May 26–29, 2005**

I. Dreiser and the Question of Genre
Chair: Stephen C. Brennan, Louisiana State University in Shreveport

1. "Traveling Home: Theodore Dreiser's Travel Narratives as Ethnic Return or Global Citizenship?" Lisa Schreibersdorf, Marquette University
2. "Theodore Dreiser's Environmental Prose: Toward a Unification of Naturalism and Nature Writing," Cara Erdheim, Fordham University
3. "Carrie in Aladdin's Cave: Romance, Realism, and Narrative Voice in 'The Prince Who Was a Thief" and *Sister Carrie*," Heidi Kim, Northwestern University

II. Narrative Strategies in Dreiser's Novels
Chair: Carol Loranger, Wright State University

1. "*Sister Carrie*: Readers' Perspectives, Objective Motivations," Michael Barry, University of Detroit Mercy
2. " 'What's the use?' Inadequate Desire and Hurstwood's Suicide," Kevin Grauke, La Salle University
3. "The 1927 *Financier*: Cuts, Additions, and Narrative Strategy," Roark Mulligan, Christopher Newport University

Beginning with the next issue, Jerome Loving of Texas A & M University joins the editorial board of *Dreiser Studies*.

# Contributors

**Linda Dunleavy** is Associate Dean of the College at Brown University where she also teaches in the American Civilization Department.

**Irene Gammel** is a professor of English and a Canada Research Chair in Modern Literature and Culture at Ryerson University in Toronto. She is the author and editor of eight books, including *Sexualizing Power in Naturalism: Theodore Dreiser and Frederick Philip Grove* (1994) and *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity—A Cultural Biography* (2002). She has also published numerous articles on issues of gender in naturalism and Theodore Dreiser.

**Lawrence E. Hussman** is Professor Emeritus at Wright State University and is a visiting professor at the University of Warsaw. He is working on a book entitled *Desire and Disillusionment in American Fiction.*

**Kevin Jett** teaches freshmen writing and introduction to literature classes at the University of Toledo, Ohio. He is particularly interested in the treatment of the businessman, consumerism, and corporate liberalism in American literature. His work has appeared in *Lamar Journal of the Humanities*, *Dreiser Studies, Mississippi Quarterly*, and *MidAmerica*.

**Kathryn M. Plank** is the associate director of Faculty and TA Development at The Ohio State University and an adjunct assistant professor in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership. Her latest work is on program assessment in higher education administration.

**Kayann Short** is a senior instructor teaching writing and women's studies in the Farrand Academic Program at the University of Colorado. She also directs three service learning projects in conjunction with her courses. Her scholarship focuses on the U.S. second wave women's movement and its historical and literary connections with Cuban women's rights.

**Roger W. Smith** is an independent scholar living in New York City. He is the bibliographer for *Dreiser Studies* and is working on an updated bibliog-

raphy of Dreiser.

**Meghan Sweeney** is an assistant professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, where she teaches courses in children's and adolescent literature and critical theory. Her most recent article, which addresses library culture in children's books, will appear in the spring 2005 issue of *Children's Literature*.

**David Zimmerman** is an assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. He has published essays on the intersection of American literature, art, and markets in *American Literature*, *Arizona Quarterly*, and *ESQ*. His book *Panic: Markets, Crises, and Crowds in American Fiction* will appear in spring 2006.

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This index is divided into three parts: a subject index, a list of books reviewed, and an index of contributors. Reviews of books appear under the name of the author or editor of the book, with the reviewer's name given in parentheses in the citation. In the Index of Contributors, reviews are grouped separately and cited after other contributions by the contributor. This index, as well as previous indices of the *Dreiser Newsletter* and *Dreiser Studies*, is published simultaneously on the journal's website: http://www.uncw.edu/dreiser/studies/

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Donovan, Nancy McIlvaine. "Representing Grace Brown: The Working-Class Woman in 'American Tragedy' Narratives." 31.2 (Fall 2000): 3–21.

———. "Susan Smith: An 'American Tragedy' Narrative Retold." 34.1 (Summer 2003): 58–65.

### Checklists and Index

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———. "A Dreiser Checklist, 1993–1997." 31.2 (Fall 2000): 39–57.

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Smith, Roger W. "A Dreiser Checklist, 1998–1999." 34.2 (Winter 2003): 57–70.

———. "A Dreiser Checklist, 2000–2001." 35.1 (Summer 2004): 38–52.

———. "A Dreiser Checklist, 2002–2003." 35.2 (Winter 2004): 45–59.

———. "Overlooked Items in Previous Dreiser Checklists." 34.2 (Winter 2003): 71–104.

———. "Review Essay: Dreiser on the Web." 34.1 (Summer 2003): 66–91.



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***Dawn***

Brennan, Stephen C. " 'Are not cat men afraid of mothers?' Self-Creation in *Dawn*." 33.2 (Fall 2002): 68–102.

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Hoeller, Hildegard. "Herland and Hisland: Illness and 'Health' in the Writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Theodore Dreiser." 34.2 (Winter 2003): 24–43.

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"The First Three Paragraphs of *Sister Carrie* as They Appear in the English Originals and in Translation." 33.1 (Spring 2002): 70–75.

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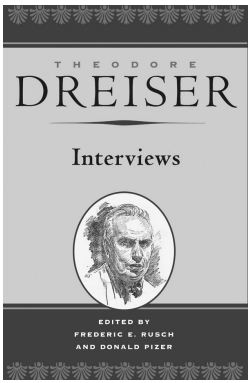


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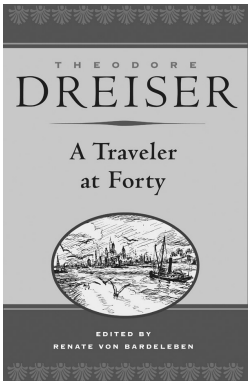


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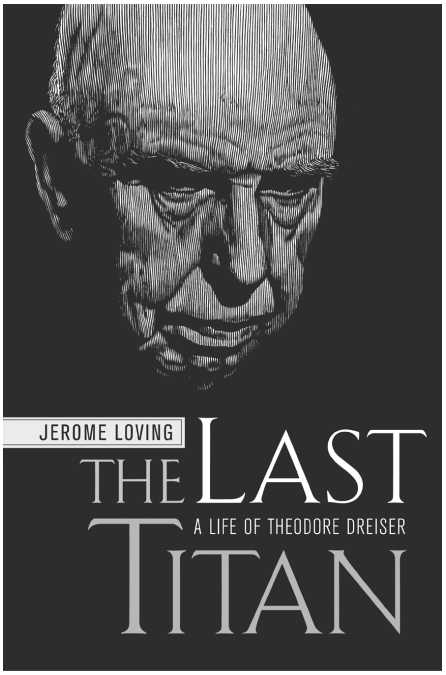


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